THE BHAGAVAD GITA

THE BHAGAVAD GITA

A SUBLIME HYMN OF DIALECTICS COMPOSED BY THE ANTIQUE SAGE-BARD VYĀSA

with general and introductory essays, verse commentary, word notes, Samskrit *text and English translation.*

BY

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DEDICATED

TO

NĀRĀYANA GURU

TRIBUTES TO VYĀSA

(from the West)

O THOU, venerable first of poets, interpreter of the numinous, whatever be thy name among mortals, O Author of this Song whose maxims transport the spirit to the eternal and divine heights of an inexpressible felicity, I incline myself profoundly before thee in one everlasting adoration for thy sacred words.

—FRIEDRICH VON SCHLEGEL (from the Latin)

(from the East)

SALUTATION to thee, O Vyāsa of all-extensive intelligence, whose expansive vision is like the fully-opened lotus flower and who, by means of the oil of the Bhārata epic, has lit the Lamp of Wisdom!

—MEDITATION ON THE GITA (*Gita Dhyanam*, from the Samskrit)

PREFACE

It was while staying with friends in Madras in August 1954 that the idea of writing a translation with commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita* seriously presented itself to me When talking informally to these friends on certain aspects of spiritual or contemplative life, inevitably the *Bhagavad Gita* came to be quoted or referred to, as it always happens in modern India even as in olden days Because the view I took seemed to differ strikingly from the conventional and popularly accepted one, I was asked to make myself clear more and more elaborately on many more occasions As still more friends became interested, the repetition of these explanations soon became tedious The best way out of the situation was therefore to put down on paper all that I wished to say for the satisfaction primarily of disciples and friends, but without omitting to keep in mind the general reader interested in this great book That was how it happened that between the autumnal months of 1954 and 1955 (which, by the way coincided with the centennial year of my teacher Narayana Guru) the present work was done

Besides the immediate promptings of circumstances there was a deeper and remoter stimulus which had brought me to study the *Gita* This came from Narayana Guru himself over thirty years back from the centennial year It was on a certain sunny afternoon while I resided as a disciple of the Guru at the *ashram* at Varkala on the Southern Malabar coast in 1925 that the Guru put to me gently the unostentatious question "How could Krishna ask Arjuna to kill? Finding no ready answer myself the Guru replied in a low voice ' He would have regretted later ' This cryptic response remained treasured in my memory but I could not see at once the whole implication of what the Guru meant

Once more after an interval of two years while again living with the Guru the conversation turned to the *Gita* This time it was the disciple who had the idea. He suggested that in the study of the *Gita* the blemish of the canvas should not be attributed to the picture in the mind of the painter The canvas here was the historical setting of the Mahābhārata war as

described in the epic poem, and the painting was the wisdom teaching that Vyāsa wanted to transmit to future generations through this medium. The Guru seemed pleased with this way of looking at the teaching of the *Gita*. Not only was his approval thus given, but the Guru also added that the view deserved to be made known. Such are the remoter circumstances that have prompted this work.

A number of circumstances have also favoured the launching of the undertaking. My old friend and companion, not to say fellow-pilgrim in the path of *brahma-vidya* (Wisdom of the Absolute), John Spiers, was again ready to help me. We sat together in crowded mail and express trains between Bombay, Poona, Mangalore, Cannanore, Trivandrum, Varkala and Madras, in over-freighted launches on the lagoons of Malabar, and moved among the thickly-forested hills of Coorg and the Nilgiris, spending days in strange bungalows in remote places, or in the interior regions of the palm-beach country. John would be scribbling away while I dictated. We carried all the reference books we wanted, wherever we went. The first typescript was accomplished by John by encroaching often far into the region of night-time, by the end of the year. By some strange irony we lacked only those two conditions which are believed to be favourable for writing—quiet and seclusion. Still, books for reference have come to us by strange chance, and forces conspired to get the work more or less finished by August 1955.

Let this task be our common dedication to the memory of Nārāyana Guru and also mark the thirty years of thought given to the *Gita* by the present commentator from his thirtieth year to his sixtieth birthday in February 1955. These are significant though small coincidences in regard to this work which is intended to serve the requirements of the disciples of the Gurukula and the general public for many years to come.

Besides John Spiers whose help I have relied on greatly in being able to bring this to light, he acting most effectively as a representative and modern-minded Western *pūrva pakshin* (anterior questioner), to stimulate my own power to express myself more precisely than I would have done left to myself, I am indebted to one or two friends with whom I have discussed problems in Samskrit grammar, among whom I must mention the name of Sali Ramachandra Rao of Belgaum. My friend Nityachaitanya Yati who has come to be an inmate of the Gurukula fresh from his philosophical studies after lecturing

in the Universities of Travancore and Madras, has also helped me by reading the comments to point out to me those passages which are too involved and not likely to be explicit to the average reader, to help me to eliminate some at least if not all of them

My thanks are also due to my good friend T P Santhanakrishna, formerly Principal, Teachers' College, Saidapet, Madras University for the great and patient pains he has taken in going through proofs involving details of diacritical marks, the well known headache of the orientalist publisher

The reader will be able to discern stray cases of error here and there In as much as they are not so serious as to mislead the student and amenable to self correction by correct repetition of the same words elsewhere, with due apology they have been left over as too late to rectify in this first edition itself

To these friends and others who have showered on me their best wishes and encouragement I here record my thanks

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NOTE ON SAMSKRIT TRANSLITERATION

On the principle of having wisdom teaching as the end in view, we have limited the aesthetic ugliness of diacritical marks to a minimum, only marking, in the body of the book, the three long vowels in Samskrit, "ā", "ī" and "ū".

The vowel and diphthong sounds of Samskrit can be found to approximate to these in the doggerel: "Say, Oh Pa, we could run into my house." These would approximately represent "e", "o", "ā", "ī", "ū", "a", "i", "u", "ai" and "au."

The English sounds "f" and "th" are not found in Samskrit, so, where "ph" and "th" are found, these should be pronounced approximately as in the words "u*ph*old" and "foo*th*old." The sounds "ch" and "sh" are as in English "*ch*ip" and "*sh*ip" but all other combinations of a consonant succeeded by an "h", such as "bh" and "dh" should be aspirated. The sound represented by "ri" as in K*ri*shna, is a trilled "r".

Over such common names such as Gita, Krishna, Rama, etc., we have placed no marks as they are already anglicized.

However, the full diacritical system now in general use will be found in the romanized Samskrit Word Index where it is scholastically necessary.

—Editor

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INTRODUCTION

HOW THE GITA IS A SONG

OVER the vast sub-continent of India, when the monsoon rains have ceased and the harvest has been gathered in, there is a lull in the goings and comings of human life At such a season, when the clear starry nights are neither too cold nor too warm, the time is favourable for people young and old to foregather after nightfall and engage their leisure hours in entertainments or in stimulating or elevating occupations Popular dances and pageantry are naturally included The stories of the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahabharata* (in which the *Bhagavad Gita* is set), the great epics of India, offer them an endless mine of material from which to draw inspiration and joy

Such is the natural setting into which the name *Bhagavad Gita* (Song of God) has to be related, before one can understand how this great masterpiece of contemplative philosophy came to be known as a song Whether we take it to be a "celestial", or "divine" or a "simple" song sung by God Himself, whether we take the two adjuncts in "God's Song" as equally applicable, as a double epithet to a favourite philosophical work so popular with the masses of India (these interpretations being equally permissible according to the rules of Samskrit grammar), the main fact for the lay reader to recognize would be that, in the Gita we have a highly philosophical work which has gained the status of an elevating scripture on a par with the Vedas and the Upanishads

The Gita itself refers to other similar writings of seers (*rishis*) under the description of a "song"

> "Sung by rishis in many ways, severally and distinctly in [different] metres, and also in the aphoristic words of the *Brahma-Sutras*, replete with critical reasonings and positively determined (xiii, 4)

The Gita, therefore, is a very popular well known song, lulling and elevating, at once soothing and exalting, which has

for its subject matter wisdom teaching of a very rare and superior order We can more easily understand the figurative sense in which the Gita is a song when we remember that even in the West writers like Plato have referred to Dialectic as a hymn (in *The Republic*, 532 A to C), and that even Dante calls his epic *La Divina Commedia*—the Divine Comedy No better example of a text suitable at once for a song and a study in the field of what is called 'the wisdom of the East' can be found in such a compact and convenient form

The Gita may be said to be the finest flowering of wisdom, pure or applied, which is sublime and precise at once Its growing popularity through the centuries and even in modern times is sufficiently explained, not so much by its cherished position among the religious textbooks of the Indian people in any closed or static sense, but because it highly deserves, by its universal appeal and by the high hope it holds out to all mankind, a permanent place among works referring to perennial and contemplative wisdom which can know no barrier of race, religion or tradition

AUTHORSHIP

By popular assent the authorship of the Gita is attributed to Vyasa, also called Veda Vyasa, or Krishna Dvaipayana He is also reputed to be the author of the *Brahma Sutras* (Aphorisms on the Wisdom of the Absolute) and alluded to under the name Badarayana As Dvaipayana he was known to be of black colour as suggested by the name Krishna (black) usually applied to him His father Parasara was the son of a woman of lowly birth while Vyasa himself had a fisher damsel for mother

Though surrounded by a certain amount of mystery, the name of Vyasa as it appears in the various scriptures of Hinduism still occupies a central position as one of the most important revaluators of spirituality Whenever the flow of the most subtle aspects of Hindu doctrines were threatened with any kind of danger or disaster whether theoretical or actual, we find Vyasa appearing on the scene to save the situation Historically whenever there was the danger of interruption in the continuity of the most precious esoteric heritage of wisdom in India whenever the continuity and flow of the wisdom traversing the barriers of one generation after another was likely to be broken or to become extinguished the same mystic

and mysterious figure of Vyasa is seen, as mentioned in many of the *puranas* (legends), emerging into the situation to save wisdom from decay or destruction Even the physical parenthood of some of the most important custodians of the spiritual heritage of Hindus is often attributed to Veda Vyasa Vyāsa therefore occupies a central key position in Indian spirituality The whole of the vast body of literature constituting the *Mahabhārata* is attributed to Vyasa

The *Mahābhārata* itself has been considered by certain authors as an aggregate of traditional lore which accumulated through a long period of history with the possibility of various interpolations and later accretions and additions

The Gita appears in the *Bhishmaparva* section of the *Mahābharata* (1 830-1531) It is in the light of the habit so prevalent among ancient classical writers in India of submerging their own identity in favour of some great name belonging to hoary Indian tradition itself, such as that of a Vasishta or a Nārada, that we have to fix the authorship of the Gita, vague as it already is, on to the generic and mysterious personage of Vyasa, rather than on a specified or actual person Vasishta as the author of the *Yoga Vāsishta* and Narada as the author of the *Bhakti Sutras* and even Patanjali's name, associated with the *Yoga Sutras* on the one hand and the *Mahābhashya* (Great Commentary) on Panini's *Grammar* on the other, offer problems of no less mystery We shall not therefore linger long here in our futile effort to fix with precision the authorship of the Gita, except to say that some particular Vyāsa, though not *the* Vyasa, wrote it

DATE OF THE COMPOSITION

Scholars have suggested that it is the result of the readjustment of Samkhya thought to the Vedic tradition, and that this took place about the third century B C It is also further suggested that although the original was composed then, it was brought to its present form by some follower of the Vedanta in the second century A D The famous Orientalist R Garbe is responsible for these suggestions, to which J N Farquhar adds the suggestion that the Gita could be considered 'an old verse Upanishad written rather later than the *Svetasvatara* and worked up into the Gita in the interests of Krishnaism by a poet after the Christian era '[1] These speculations by

[1] Quoted by Radhakrishnan *Bhaga ad Gita* p 14.

Western scholars may be set off against the opposite tendency of writers like B. G. Tilak who, in their orthodox religious devotion to the book tend to exaggerate the antiquity of the work beyond all limits that sane and critical scholarship can appreciate. Tilak for example, puts the date as 3100 B.C.[1]

In the present work we do not wish to fix finally either the date or the authorship of the Gita. We believe that it would not be far wrong even to suggest that the Indian mind loves to retain the mystery rather than to lay it too bare. There is even a vernacular proverb which says it is wrong to trace the ancestry of a sage or to follow up a river to its very source. Seeing that many reputed scholars have applied their critical acumen and erudite imagination to this subject in vain, and, out of deference also to the delicate sentiments of the popular Indian mind, we prefer, in this matter, to leave the subject there. Scholars and religionists are free to have their say in this highly speculative domain, while we retain for ourselves an open mind.

UNIVERSAL APPRECIATION

That the Gita has enjoyed an honoured place in India goes without saying. More than the appreciations shown by individuals sensitive to wisdom-values, the teaching of the Gita may be said to have influenced indirectly the whole population of India, generally enriching and nourishing its spiritual life and promoting a love of truth and justice during the last fifteen centuries. Although it is difficult to gauge in terms of actuality what service it did to the people of India, its general effect in raising the standard of thought towards a true and contemplative order can by no means be considered negligible. Rather it can easily be visualized as having been truly momentous in effect, even when we make due allowance for the paradox involved in the Gita teaching.

Such a far reaching influence was not at all confined to the limits of India. As early as 1785 Charles Wilkins translated the work into English and printed it in quarto forme in London. This was followed by a French translation by Emile Burnouf in 1861. Various other translations followed in the

[1] "When this was written by Vyasa cannot be definitely stated. He must however have done it within a few years of the fight and we may roughly say that the date of the original Gita is somewhat about 3100 B.C."—B. G. Tilak, *Gita Rahasya*, Vol. II, p. xxxvii.

West and the whole story of the rapid popularity gained by the Gita is mentioned in a brochure published by an esteemed friend of the present writer, Mr Paul Hubert, under the title *Histoire de la Bhagavad Gita* This places on record how the reputation of the Gita spread throughout the world from 1785 to the present day In his study in Paris Mr. Hubert actually had round him as many as 132 different editions of the Gita, in various languages—English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, Polish, Swedish, Czech, Servian, Russian, Hungarian, Esperanto, etc

Considering the above facts it is clear that the appeal of the Gita has some element of universality implicit in it, for the appreciation of which one has no need to discard one's own more limited loyalty of civilization or of religion Without any doubt the appeal of the Gita is human and universal.

SENTIMENTAL ESTIMATES

A book can be admired for wrong or inferior reasons, just as it is possible for a saint or philosopher to be misrepresented by his own disciples Such a possibility is what made some of them cry out in despair, "God defend me from my friends!" as the proverb puts it The Gita has suffered from various grades of appreciation or respect shown for it Some have considered the Gita as a kind of amulet Miniature editions have been enclosed in small cases to be worn round the neck as a religious charm This is true not only of orthodox Hindus but of others outside that fold, like a young American lady who was known to carry the Gita always with her for reasons of auspiciousness or safety

There are others only one degree removed from this extreme case who treat the Gita as a holy object or as having hierophantic value Others, still more reasonable, have appreciated the Gita in a slightly improved form They have often selected their favourite verses for private prayers or for being used at family gatherings Most persons belonging to this category have tended to treat the Gita as consisting of seven hundred separate spiritual thoughts more or less aphoristically stated in verse form The very mention of the word Gita is sufficient for such persons to feel that special numinous thrill which religious people often experience and to which they might have been previously *conditioned in their own group life.* Krishna's various promises, even to save the sinner, and parts

of the vision contained in the eleventh chapter, appeal to their devotional temperaments. Verses of ethical import or divine protection may also be included in such appreciations of a childishly religious order.[1]

Favourite collections of Gita verses of this type have been compiled even in the name of great or reputed spiritual leaders or personalities such as Mahatma Gandhi or Ramana Maharishi. Some of these stress practice, others renunication and there are a few who even think that the Gita preaches outright politics with all its evils such as war and wholesale slaughter. These preferences as a rule reflect the temperaments of those who select them and could even be used for diagnosing the types to which they consciously or unconsciously belong. The Gita itself enunciates the law of mutual accord as follows: " That which one's faith is, one is even that ". (xvii, 3.) The variety and number of such appreciations are far too great for us to attempt a passing reference to all of them.

MORE SERIOUS ESTIMATES IN INDIA

Fortunately, the Gita has had more serious minds to appraise its value. Highly intelligent praise has been showered on the Gita in India. Two such instances are in verse form. The *Gita Mahātmya* is one of these, found in the *Varaha Purāna*. It is often prefixed to Indian editions of the Gita. This particular composition is based on the practice of the Gita teaching in connection with worship or recitation. The various grades of spiritual merit that could accrue from the study or reading of the Gita are all mentioned in it in detail. For example, it says in the twelfth verse. " By reading of a third part one obtains the same merit as bathing in the Ganges." Although the appreciation is on the lines of Vedic orthodoxy, still, it is relieved by statements such as " The Gita is my Supreme Science, it is verily the form of Brahma," and in verse 9 it adds significantly, " It is the three Vedas, the final bliss, the exposition of knowledge of first principles (*tattva*)."

[1] Sri Aurobindo complains " I hold it therefore of small importance to extract from the Gita its exact metaphysical connotation as it was understood by the men of the time—even if that were accurately possible That it is not possible, is shown by the divergence of the original commentaries which have been or are still being written upon it, for they all agree in each disagreeing with all the others. Each finds in the Gita its own system of metaphysics and trend of religious thought."—*Essays on the Gita, I Series*, p. 4

Another favourite composition, in verse, and which is found prefixed to most Indian editions of the Gita, is called the *Gita Dhyana* (Meditation on the Gita) It is from the *Vaishnaviya Tantrasara* It goes into the authorship and subject matter with much greater penetrating contemplative insight than the *Mahatmya* which only treated the Gita as a holy book

Here, in the *Gita Dhyana*,[1] the Gita is called the Mother—presumably of wisdom teaching, and justified all the more with the feminine gender of the word Gita ending with a long vowel in Samskrit In a striking metaphor, it compares all the Upanishads to cows, the milker is the joy of the cow herds (Krishna) Arjuna is the calf and men of high intelligence are those who enjoy the nectar milk which is the Gita teaching This allegorical method is developed in this poem in some detail in an eloquent and classically antique style Bhishma and Drona, the two Gurus beside the Absolutist Guru Krishna, are compared to the two banks of the battle river, and various other characters of the Mahabharata war are compared to rocks, billows alligators and whirlpool The last figure of speech is applied to Duryodhana, the leader of the Kaurava army The lotus flower (meaning the whole of the Mahabhārata epic) has a perfume which is compared to the subtle import of the words of the son of Parasara (Vyasa) Yogis, it concludes see the bright sun towards which the lotus unfolds its petals The secondary anecdotes within the lotus epic are the stamens, surrounding the teaching which is the very core of the flower

ASSESSMENTS FROM OUTSIDE INDIA

The estimations of the worth of the Gita from intelligent persons outside India have been both penetrating and unstinted in praise The French Orientalist Emile Burnouf after praising the Gita as uniting within its scope the most noble sentiments of human nature with the Stoic law of detachment recommends the book to Westerners with these characteristic words "One sees that there have been men who could think better than us and who have traced the way of salvation ' The appreciation coming from the German poet F Von Schlegel as early as 1823 is marked by wholeheartedness and

[1] A translation of the *Gita Dhyana* will be found as an appendix to this volume

spontaneity. In his eloquent Latin quoted by Sir Edwin Arnold, Schlegel apostrophises Vyāsa as follows:

> "O thou venerable first of poets, interpreter of the numinous, whatever be thy name among mortals, O Author of this Song whose maxims transport the spirit to the eternal and divine heights of an inexpressible felicity; I incline myself profoundly before thee in one everlasting adoration for thy sacred words".

To the long list of early admirers of the Gita may be added the name of Victor Cousins who masterfully summarized its message in his lectures on philosophy at the University of Paris in 1841. Sir Edwin Arnold, the famous English poet who rendered the Gita into English verse, compares it with the New Testament, without however, suggesting as some others have done, that it might have borrowed its teaching from the Bible, a notion which is hardly worth treating seriously.

From the remarks of the French psychologist, T. A. Ribot which appeared in *La Revue Philosophique* in 1894, it is clear that he was able to enter more deeply into the nature of the Gita. He wrote:

> "Its philosophy is not that of discursive reflection and implies views which should be systematized by a knowledge of mysticism and of intuitive penetration. To see in the Gita other specific developments of thought would be an inadequate method for its exposition. Its teachings should be considered more as alluding to degrees of realization of the Self as they have been recommended in the various schools of asceticism as inculcated by different mystical disciplines rather than as seeking any logical consistency or even dialectical penetration."[1]

Except in the last-mentioned reference to dialectics we can agree with this estimate of a first-rate thinker belonging to the strictly academic circles of the West. As we shall try to show in the sections that follow, dialectics is a little understood way of arriving at philosophical certitude. For the present reserving what we have to say on this one point, we can confidently state here that in the estimate of Prof. Ribot we have

[1] These quotations have been taken and translated from *Histoire de la Bhagavad Gita* by Paul Hubert, Paris, 1949.

one which comes closest to our own basis of discussion in the commentary of this volume

RECENT TRANSLATIONS AND COMMENTARIES

Before passing on to serious commentaries such as that of Sankara it would be natural to make a passing review of some of the editions, traditions and commentaries which have appeared in English in recent years

Politicians like Tilak (1935) and Gandhi (1946), academic professors like W D P Hill (1928), F Edgerton (1944) and S Radhakrishnan (1948), leaders of esoteric thought like Mrs Annie Besant and Bhagavan Das (1905) and those who claim to be integral Yogis such as Sri Aurobindo (1928) have all made their contributions each in a different way to the growing body of current literature on the Gita At least two poetic renderings have appeared since the publication of *The Song Celestial by Sir Edwin Arnold (1885)* *The first of these* is the verse rendering by Prof Edgerton in which he has wonderfully succeeded in retaining the quatrain stanza almost as directly as possible conforming to the words of the original Samskrit The other is by Christopher Isherwood and Swami Prabhavananda (1945) The best qualification of this rendering is that it is readable, though in doing so it often sacrifices subtle mystical doctrine in the name of modern plainness If we should include in this review the editions which have appeared in the various Indian languages during recent years, the list would swell to hundreds

Generally speaking, most of such editions may be said to look upon the Gita as a canonical or authoritative scripture of the Hindus Whether the Gita could be strictly called the scripture of any particular religious expression is a question which we shall have to discuss in some detail more than once in the sections below, because the value of the comments in the present work will depend much on coming to a proper decision on this point Even Dr Radhakrishnan treats the Gita erroneously more as a work on religious life rather than as one dealing with philosophy The very first sentence of his Introduction to his translation and commentary reads "The *Bhagavad Gita* is more a religious classic than a philosophical treatise"[1] Another eminent Indian writes "We may

[1] S Radhakrishnan *The Bhagavad Gita* p. 11

accordingly conclude that the central pivot of the teaching is activism, or, to use the expression of the Gita, karma-yoga 'devotion to the discharge of social obligations'," [1] and again "It [the Gita] emphasizes the social character of man and generally speaking declines to look upon him apart from the community of which he is a member" [2] Prof F Edgerton of Harvard also considers the Gita to have a theistic character

B G Tilak has devoted two laborious volumes to what he calls *Gita Rahasya* (The Secret of the Gita) in which he has much useful information to give Translated from the Marathi original, the two volumes represent a monumental attempt wherein the author's earnestness and energy are evident on every page, not unmixed with much erudition His attitude of a religious Hindu of an active temperament is unmistakable from what he has to say From the vast body of his writing we extract the following for illustration "In short it is perfectly clear that the proper preaching [of the Gita] in this place would be 'energism' (*pravritti*) and that, as all others are only supporting Energism, that is as they are all auxiliary, the purport of the Gita religion must also be to support Energism, that is to support Action" [3] Even Mahatma Gandhi, with whose general conclusions we have, independently of the Gita, a great desire to agree, does not examine the Gita teaching impersonally, but instead, much of his personal dogma consciously or unconsciously, is seen to take much place in it He would put *ahimsa* (non hurting) above everything else We read in his own words "Thus the author of the Gita by extending meanings of words has taught us to imitate him Let it be granted that according to the letter of the Gita it is possible to say that warfare is consistent with renunciation of fruit, but after forty years unremitting endeavour fully to enforce the teaching of the Gita in my own life, I have in all humility felt that perfect renunciation is impossible without perfect observance of *ahimsa* in every shape and form" [4]

Prof D S Sarma in his *Bhagavad Gita* (1915) stresses the fact that its central teaching is 'its simple lesson of yoga or union with God and bidding everyone of us to look upon his duty as something sacred something inviolable—in fact as the only way to infinite life' [5] Like most others who treat

[1] Prof M Hiriyanna *Outlines of Indian Philosophy* pp. 118-19 [2] *Ibid* p 124
[3] B G Tilak *Gita Rahasya* Vol I pp. 37 38.
[4] M Desai *The Gita According to Gandhi* p. 130
[5] D S Sarma *The Bhagavad Gita* p. v (Introduction)

the Gita as a sacred text of Hinduism he sees obligation where the fullest freedom is alone implied

Mrs Besant's translation with the notes and comments in collaboration with Sri Bhagavan Das[1] is free from one sided exaggerations, although the tendency to see more esoteric secrets in it than what seems warranted could have been avoided in certain places

Professor O Lacombe of Paris comes nearest to our own standpoint in the present work when he writes

> "The *Bhagavad Gita* appears to us at once as a literary expression of the most ancient form of Ekanthika Dharma and also as being the least particularized and the least sectarian, it does not intend to be a book of any determinate school but of all orthodox schools Round the personality of Krishna it sounds a recall of all traditional forces for a new life impetus and this is what explains its universal value in Hinduism'"[2]

Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita*, I and II series (Calcutta 1928) represent the point of view of a Hindu of modern times who has had the full benefit of an intellectual formation of the West as also a religious background which is deeply emotional and intuitive Temperamentally uncompromising and absolutist in his ways, it is no wonder that he thought in very realistic and living terms regarding the Absolute, and there is no mistaking that Sri Aurobindo took the teaching of the Gita to heart with the utmost earnestness Its sentiments and attitude found echo in his own heart and he was able therefore to penetrate more deeply into the spirit of the teaching of the Gita than most other critics, especially in those positively living or active aspects of the Absolute which agreed with his own deeply mystical and actively patriotic temperament Although Sri Aurobindo is as capable of appraising its teachings as any scholar or academic professor he does not desire to do so, but prefers to take the attitude of a person who merely seeks as he says "Help and light" from it! He is interested in what he calls its "essential and living message" which has to be "spiritual"

We know from the other writings of Sri Aurobindo what pattern of spiritual life or teaching is his His profuse writings

[1] Mrs Besant and Bhagavan Das, *The Bhagavad Gita*.

[2] O Lacombe *L'Absolu selon le Vedanta* (Paris 1937) p 26

leave us in no doubt in regard to this. He often speaks of the supra-mental power which can descend to manifest itself in actual terms, and there is also the ascent of human beings to the divine status which is also possible and can transform men into superior or divine personalities. From our own remarks in this introduction and in the text of the commentary it is easy to see that we too take a similar position without however resorting to theological or dogmatic expressions like God or divinity. We have taken special pains to show that the Gita teaching is not theistic or deistic. Divested of this quasi-theological or mythological vesture the truths underlying the writings of Sri Aurobindo could support our own position to a large extent. Let us quote extracts from Sri Aurobindo to bring out both the agreement and the difference that we refer to. He writes:

> "It [the Avatar] is the manifestation from above of that which we have to develop from below; it is the descent of God into that divine birth of the human being into which we mortal creatures must climb; it is the attracting divine example given by God to man in the very type and form and perfected model of our human existence."[1]

> "The union of the soul with the *Purushottama* by a yoga of the whole being is the complete teaching of the Gita and not only the union with the immutable self as the narrower doctrine which follows the exclusive way of knowledge."[2]

At the very beginning of his *Essays on the Gita* Sri Aurobindo states:

> "Our object then in studying the Gita, will not be a scholastic or academic scrutiny of its thought nor to place its philosophy in the history of metaphysical speculation nor shall we deal with it in the manner of the analytical dialectician"[3]

The two quotations that we have selected to begin with are enough to convince anyone that, regardless of this modest statement, he does have very profound and subtle doctrines of a metaphysical order to derive from the teachings of the Gita.

[1] Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita*, I Series, p. 288.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 342. [3] *Ibid.*, pp 10-13.

It is true he avoids giving his doctrines a dialectical, academic or scholarly form This however is wilfully and consciously done by him as we have stated A close scrutiny of the implications of the two quotations we have selected will, however, convince the careful reader that they bear resemblance, though *not* directly, to dialectical modes of theorization at least to esoteric schools such as the Hermetics While the kinship of his doctrines to the Tantra school of Bengal is not undiscernable, the roots of such theorization in the Indian soil are not readily traceable, especially because, as hinted at in the second quotation above, Sri Aurobindo has a lurking mistrust for anything that is of the nature of pure knowledge, which he refers to as the 'narrower doctrine' These 'narrower" doctrines however, we note on the other hand, tally with the standpoint of Sankara the most respectable of Gita commentators However, we can discern implicit in Sri Aurobindo s standpoint, in spite of its tantric and esoteric form, the same dialectics that we are to explain in some of the sections of this Introduction, as forming the key to the enigmas and problems of the Gita

Sri Aurobindo s own philosophy according to us has kinship with the realism of the Sanjaya section of the eleventh chapter of the Gita, and more pointedly to the last line of Chapter xviii, 75, where Krishna s divine presence is referred to as nothing more or less than actual An Avatar who helps the establishment of Dharma and Arjuna fulfilling his own Dharma refer, according to Sri Aurobindo, to the core of the subject-matter of the Gita, for he writes

> "Dharma in the language of the Gita means the innate law of the being and its works and an action proceeding from and determined by the inner nature, *swabhava niyatam-karma* the rest of the Gita is written to throw a fuller light on this immortal Dharma" [1]

Having been an active politician, interested in the liberation of India from foreign rule, Sri Aurobindo retained, even after he became a Yogi of Pondicherry (as made very evident in his message of Independence Day in India on August 15, 1947) those aspects of spiritual or contemplative life which refer to active realities The Gita, at least in its peripherally placed teachings, does lend support to such an attitude We

[1] *Ibid* II Series pp 217 18

have however, preferred to treat the Gita as a purer form of contemplative text based on dialectics

Among recent editions of the Gita, special and honourable mention has to be given to a translation of Jnaneshwar Mahāraj's great opus on the Gita This great Mahratha Sage lived in the early part of the 14th century The original is a record of a spoken discourse which has been translated into English with great pains and attention to detail by Mr Manu Subedar, under the title, *The Gita Explained by Dnyāneswar Maharaj*

The method adopted by the Sage in this work which enjoys rare popularity among great numbers of devotees of the Gita in the Mahratha region of India, is to have a running commentary in a simple, mystical contemplative style in which the Gita's teaching is presented in a homely, intimate form with a richness of supplementary examples and explanatory instances Even the devotee who may not be too erudite is led by the hand, as it were, to the deepest secrets which, like rare gems of mystical, contemplative or truly devotional doctrine, lie hidden in the teachings of the Gita The avoidance of all hair splitting and eyebrow knitting by the adoption of a free and easy popular style is the chief merit of this work which by itself has attained a status similar to the Gita itself in the popular mind A quiet contemplative flavour pervades the work as a whole and the reputation it has built for itself is likely to be as extensive as it is lasting

It is not necessary for us to quote at length from the *Jnaneshwari* as the work is endearingly referred to by those who practise its daily reading To justify our foregoing remarks we shall content ourselves with one representative passage to reveal the homeliness and popular appeal of the work which, however, does not compromise the soundness of the doctrines involved although the implications of subtle dialectics of the Gita as a Shastra (textbook) may not always be fully evident therein Here then is a passage referring to the negative state of the spirit of Arjuna which Krishna wants to correct (it is from the beginning of the second chapter)

Shri Krishna says to Arjuna What is the matter with you? Why have you lost courage? You are a great hero, a model Kshatriya with an unsullied name Your attitude at the call of battle is as incomprehensible as darkness covering the sun nectar meeting with death wood absorbing fire, salt dissolving water, the frog swallowing the serpent, or the fox defying the lion You are a sensible man Wake up Take

courage War is not made with rose-water Live up to your reputation and get rid of these silly ideas Kindness towards opponents in battle is misplaced Did you not know hitherto that the Kauravas were your kinsmen? "[1]

The latest example of a Gita commentary where the message of the Gita may be seen to be narrowed down and bent for the purpose of workers in the field of social reform and politics or both, is to be found in Acharya Vinoba Bhave's *Gita Pravachana* which has gained wide publicity in many of the vernaculars of India *Samya* is the central value that Vinobaji rightly sees implied in the Gita message, but this *samya* and *samya yoga* are directly meant by him to promote the free gift policy of giving lands called Bhoodan in which he is personally intent It need not be pointed out that *samya* or 'sameness" or "identity' is a philosophical expression belonging to yoga or dialectics, which it would be unfair to limit and degrade for supporting a localized cause in a spirit of excessive zeal, however much the laudable end of Bhoodan might seem to justify such an interpretation

THE CLASSICAL COMMENTATORS

(Sankara Ramanuja and Madhva)

The classical commentators of the Gita are many Among them we have the great names of Sankara (788 826 A D), Rāmanuja (1017-1137 A D), and Madhva (1199 1317?) Although there are other names such as those of Vallabhachārya, Nimbarka, Sridharaswami and Ānandagiri, whose opinions and comments find place in Gita literature, in the present commentary we propose to give prime importance only to Sankara Rāmanuja and Madhva were founders of religious groups who based their comments largely on the point of view of Sankara whether by differing considerably from him or by travelling with him on similar lines in revaluation and estimation of the Gita All three Sankara Ramanuja and Madhva were orthodox Vedantins of what are known as the Advaita (non dualist) Vishishtadvaita (more specifically non dualistic) and the Dvaita (dualistic) schools The last two names are those of Gurus who belonged to the Vishnu context and who may be said to be representatives of the religious tradition of the Bhagavata religion also associated with the Pancharathras and the Narayaniya sects whose origins are

[1] M Subedar *Gita Explained by Dnyaneshwar Maharaj* p [illegible]9

lost in antiquity On the other hand, Sankara follows the equally ancient Siva tradition, although accepting and adoring all the other gods of the Indian pantheon in a graded, critical and comparative manner The Vaishnavite Gurus were theologically minded, while Sankara gave primacy to wisdom (*jnana*) discrediting ritual and totally averse to treating action and wisdom as both important to adopt in spiritual life

SANKARAS UNIQUE POSITION

Sankara therefore, although himself recognized as a Guru of the Smartha sect in South India at the present time, was more of a philosopher than a religious leader This is not to say, however that he did not himself influence spiritual life In deed, Sankaras is the greatest single philosophical influence prevailing to the present day in India as a whole He was undoubtedly *the greatest of the interpreters of the ancient wisdom* of India and the respect that he enjoys in India and even among thinkers in the world outside India acquainted with Vedanta is very considerable and in many respects unrivalled The difference between him and the other two Gurus who have commented on the Gita is one of methodological and epistemological outlook Vedanta in the hands of Ramanuja and Madhva has a more theistically religious complexion, while Sankara, like his predecessor Gaudapada of the same rational tradition remains more purely philosophic Sankara thus occupies a key position in regard to the prevailing spiritual pattern of Indian life as a whole Sankara is equally well recognized in the North of India and in the South Although he was himself mistrusted in his own time as being a 'Buddhist in disguise, because of the great importance he gave to Reason yet when it comes to naming a single personality who may be said to represent the best philosophic tradition which has survived and is still in vogue among the intelligent section of the people of India to the present day, Sankaras name has undoubtedly to be given all primacy

SANKARAS HISTORICAL ROLE

About the period when the Guptas ruled, when Buddhism was in decline in India largely owing to political reasons, there was a spiritual vacuum in the land The monastic life of the Buddhists had to give way to a revalued and readjusted

form of spiritual life. The heterodox rationalism of the Buddhists had come to be discredited and there was no valid philosophy to displace it. In its latest form, the Gita was itself a fulfilment of the spiritual need of the times and Sankara's commentary on the Gita came just at that period when there was a certain anarchy and confusion of spiritual values in the mind of the ordinary people Vedic ritualism also tended to be discredited among the masses and the regulating influence so necessary to keep people from falling into an era of decadence of norms and standards of a just or truthful life was absent[1] By his comments Sankara was able to give stability and continuity to the flow of righteous teaching down through the succeeding generations His importance as a commentator of the Gita is thus unique, representative and comprehensive In our own commentary Sankara's position is the only one we have treated with any seriousness, whether to agree with or to differ from

SANKARA'S CONFLICTING ATTITUDES

Even with this single representative we have not found much need to enter into any strikingly different point of view. When they concern philosophical doctrines, Sankara's conclusions are, on the whole, acceptable to us However, when he tends to look on the Gita as a book laying down religious obligations, or rules of life and conduct, treating it as a *dharma shāstra* (textbook on right ways of life) or a *Smriti* (wisdom teachings applied to the practical life, incorporating *dharma shastra*), and not as a purely contemplative text, we tend to differ from him

How the Gita is far from coming under the category of *Smartha* (obligatory religious) literature, will be evident both from our former remarks on this subject and what we have to say below as also from the remarks that we have made by way of comment when such aspects of spirituality come to be treated in the text That Sankara himself does not treat the Gita seriously as a *Smriti* or book of obligatory conduct, should be evident from his definite remark in commenting on Chapter II, 10 as follows

> "The conclusion therefore, of the *Bhagavad Gita* is that salvation is attained by knowledge alone and not by

[1] A brilliant picture of the times is given by S. K. Belvalkar in his *Vedanta Philosophy*, pp. 176-81 (Poona 1929)

knowledge conjoined by works That such is the teaching of the Gita we shall show here and there in the following sections according to the context " [1]

That knowing cannot be considered an obligation or an action should be clear to anyone That action belongs to one plane and knowing belongs to another is stated in the beginning of Sankara's *Vivekachūdāmani* in very unequivocal terms Although some scholars on the basis of certain references such as " Moreover it is so stated in Smriti " (*Brahma Sūtras*, ii, iii, 45) and " (These details are recorded by Smriti with reference to the Yogins, and both (Sankhya and Yoga) are Smriti (only) ", (*Brahma Sutras*, iv, ii, 21), found in Sankara's comments on the *Brahma Sutras*, where the word Smriti is used by Bādarāyana, still persist in thinking that the Gita is a Smriti (work of obligatory religious tradition), and though Sankara as commentator is only indirectly responsible for so treating the Gita, we can only say here that any text teaching *Brahma-Vidyā* (the Science of the Absolute) as the Gita itself avowedly claims to be (as stated at the end of every chapter), cannot be a Smriti, more especially in the light of the very conclusive statement of Sankara himself which we have quoted above. Leaving the controversy for the moment, we can state here that we take the Gita to be a book devoted to the wisdom of the Absolute with no mandatory reference to obligatory action, or traditional conduct in it. We have the support of the greatest commentator on the Gita in this appraisal of the nature of the Gita

So far we have been able to see from the spontaneous appreciation of the Gita in India and outside, from scholars, from the commentaries of founders of religious groups and from philosophers, that the Gita is a highly treasured book of ancient wisdom of a contemplative, intuitive and mystical order In the Gita, closed and static tendencies have been subjected to a dialectical revaluation, making them open, universal and dynamic It cannot be said to be the scripture merely of any one particular religious expression, whether of Hinduism, the Bhagavata cult or of Vaishnavism of a later date Its outlook is universal and fully philosophical in the best sense of the term Fuller justification of these claims will be found in this

[1] A. Mahadeva Sastri, B.A., *Bhagavad Gita with Commentary by Shri Sankaracharya*, (Madras, 1897) p. 17

introduction and in the body of the commentary itself according to the occasion.

NO RIVALRY INTENDED IN THE PRESENT COMMENTARY

From what we have said it will be sufficiently evident that the Gita has drawn to itself the attention of many master minds of the world during the last fifteen centuries The great commentaries themselves have been interpreted by the disciples of the various Gurus in works which themselves have become classics Different philosophies have been derived by each according to the background to which each belonged In India, whenever a man of intelligence had any pretensions for religious leadership or for Guruhood, one of the first qualifications considered desirable by himself or by the public was a reputation based on an interpretation of the Gita.

It has therefore to be stated in advance here that the present commentator has no such ambitions or pretensions A few friends and disciples of the present writer happened to evince a keen interest in the way the Gita was interpreted by him The volume and intensity of such interest became enlarged from day to day and the demand for a complete statement of such views and meanings on the Gita as a whole became very pressing and imperative These circumstances have been sufficiently explained in the Preface of this book

THE REASON FOR MISTAKE OF TREATING THE GITA AS A WORK OF OBLIGATORY NATURE

If we ask why the contents of the eighteen chapters and the 700 verses of the Gita have been so puzzling that most commentators have tended to treat it as a book on obligatory, religious or traditional lore, instead of treating it, as it highly deserves to be, on a par with the most authoritative writings pertaining to pure contemplative wisdom, the reasonable answer is that the author of the Gita was faced with taking cognizance of the existing schools of spiritual thought and practice of his own time, like any other writer

Such a body of anterior opinion (known in India as *Purva paksha*) happened to be, by necessary historical and ideological circumstances, the inevitable background of the Gita

References had to be made to such opinions, not with a view to recommending a new set of religious or philosophical obligations or doctrines in their place, but to expound the open and dynamic metaphysics of wisdom itself This is sufficiently clear from the text itself

> "Abandoning all duties, come to Me, the One, for refuge I shall absolve you from all sins, do not despair". (xviii, 66)

The Gita's own teaching, however, belongs to the context of contemplative mysticism based on an intuitive approach rather than on reason or logic in the ordinary sense. What the Gita wants to emphasize is repeated twice (in ix, 34 and in xviii, 65)

> "Become one in mind with Me, be devoted to Me, sacrifice to Me, bow down to Me, unifying thus yourself, you shall surely come to Me"

THE GITA TEACHES DIALECTICS OR YOGA

Throughout the Gita we are able to recognize a certain antique and somewhat outmoded yet time honoured type of reasoning known as Dialectics which has close similarities to the method of Yoga as intended by the author of the Gita Yoga and Dialectics have very much in common When the dialectical character of the treatment of the Gita is understood, a door then opens automatically leading to the solution of many enigmas that have puzzled commentators throughout history The yogic method of equating, balancing, or cancelling-out the counterparts belonging to an argument or a situation in life has a tradition dating back to antiquity in India and to pre Socratic times in the West The paradoxes of Zeno and the dialectical method of Parmenides which were present in the writings of Plotinus 900 years later, and which have at least a theoretical kinship another 1500 years later in our own times in Hegel and Bergson, have a mystical intuitive contemplative approach to wisdom or happiness which is the way of perennial philosophy none other than the Yoga of the Gita

Each of the eighteen chapters of the Gita has been called a Yoga. Indeed, the very first chapter has the enigmatic title

The Yoga of the Conflict (vishada) *of Arjuna* Conflict or suffering itself here becomes elevated to the status of a Yoga It is not merely practical aspects of spiritual life or discipline that have been thus called Yoga, but even chapters devoted to theoretical problems of philosophy, such as Chapter xiii (*The Yoga of the Distinction between the Actual and the Perceptual*) It is only in the sense of Dialectics that such a term as Yoga in these titles has meaning

In giving due credit to the author of the Gita in this matter of understanding the term Yoga as the author himself understood it or intended it to mean consists therefore of another important reason which justifies the need and enhances the value of the present commentary Numerous enigmas and unexplained portions are found in almost every commentary which is available to the present day In the light of a truer, larger and more comprehensive concept of Yoga as here accepted, it has been possible to delve deeper into the methodology, epistemology and scheme of values which the Gita represents

THE KEY OF DIALECTICS NOT APPLIED TO THE GITA HITHERTO

The polemical pattern adopted by Sankara and the other classical commentators has followed the usual norms and methods of logical reasoning With Sankara in particular, it has been a method of successively discrediting a series of supposed anterior sceptics called *purva pakshin*

The Gita, on its part, however, uses a dialectical method to determine a scale of values in life rather than teaching a particular doctrine This series of values in the Gita culminates in that supreme Value called the Absolute or the *Brahman* The Gita is a textbook on the Science of the Absolute (*Brahma Vidya*) As Prof Ribot has been able to recognize in his appreciation of the Gita already quoted discursive reflection does not belong to the Gita Rather it is one of "mysticism and of intuitive penetration

The supreme Value implied in the Gita teaching is attainment of identity with the Absolute personified in the Guru here who happens to be Krishna That the Guru and the Absolute are one is not a new proposition in Vedanta Stress on devotion to a Guru cannot be considered a form of theism but is only normal to wisdom teaching in India The

twice-repeated verse quoted above, occupying key positions at the end of Chapter ix, which marks the centre of the work, and near the end of the last chapter, respectively, fixes for us the simple truth that the Gita is meant by the author to teach one doctrine only This teaching is that of a complete bi polar affiliation between the contemplative and the pure Absolute as one of the most important pre requisites for attaining to full wisdom of the Absolute

THE WISDOM DIALOGUE BETWEEN GURU AND DISCIPLE

The key to the proper appraisal of the Gita consists in the recognition of the Gita as a dialogue between a wisdom teacher and a disciple a *Guru sishya samvada* All wisdom teaching implies a representative questioner or a doubter who is scep tical of the doctrine propounded Such a person typifies and sums up in himself the position in regard to the wisdom in question and is known in Vedantic literature as the *purva pakshin*—as we have already said The Guru himself who gives the revised revalued or restated version of the wisdom in question represents the *siddhantin* the one of finalized or accomplished view Between the two poles represented by the Guru and the sishya there takes place what we call the dialectical revaluation of the wisdom

Such dialogues are not altogether unknown in the West where we have those of Socrates recorded by Plato The Socratic method is that of rejecting a number of opinions of Athenian young men such as Glaucon or Timaeus and thereby arriving at what is knowledge and not mere opinion In Buddhist literature such dialogues are very common as in *The Milinda Questions* where Nagasena is questioned by King Milinda We have the *Yoga Vasishta* which treats of wisdom in the same dialogue form Instead of Arjuna who is the questioning disciple in the Gita we have Sri Rama in the *Yoga Vasishta* and not as a warrior but as a seeker of Vedantic wisdom Many of the Upanishads have the same literary device It is perhaps the most suitable way to strike the delicate contrast so often implied in the revaluation of wisdom implied in the text Young Nachiketas and Yama form the typical disciple and Guru of the *Katha* Upanishad Nachiketas resembles Arjuna in the type of doubt that he represents in his person

The core of the Gita therefore consists of a dialogue on the most secret aspects of Upanishadic wisdom If the Upanishads are considered as original wisdom texts or *srutis* there is no reason to exclude the Gita from such a category of literature, when we know that Vyasa inserted this dialogue between Guru and Sishya in a larger epic poem the *Mahabharata* for other reasons

VYASAS RESORT TO LITERARY DEVICES

It is easy to imagine how Vyasa was obliged to resort to some literary devices so that a wisdom dialogue could be fitted into an epic text in the most unobtrusive manner possible These literary devices (mentioned in more detail later) are introduced in a graded order of actual or perceptual value and help to merge the contemplative context lodged at the core of the epic *There is a perfect symmetry of construction and what* ever artificial elements are introduced at the beginning of the work are again resorted to in inverse order before the event of the dialogue is left behind normally for the con tinuation of the narrative proper of the *Mahabharata* epic itself

ORTHODOXYS DOMAIN

If in spite of its clear character as a wisdom text some persons still persist in calling the Gita a religious book of obligations it must be because of their inability to separate the painting from the canvas or the wall from the picture drawn thereon The epic is the wall on which the picture is the wisdom teach ing of Vyasa If it is not ignorance that makes them call the Gita an epic or traditional lore of religious obligation (*smriti*) the persistent wilfulness must be attributed to the fact that orthodoxy still secretly nourishes the idea of having chosen preserves or private domains into which they do not wish the generality of the people to walk as freely as they like This tendency is not unknown in respect of orthodoxies other than Hinduism We can only say by way of a note of warning that such closing tendencies are neither possible nor compatible with the free and open way of unity and human solidarity towards which all thinking men and women are turning their eyes at present

VYĀSA'S "SIGNATURE"

Vyāsa's name occurs thrice in the text. He is first mentioned as a seer (*rishi*) in x, 13, and again as a silent recluse (*muni*) in x, 37; but in xviii, 75 Vyāsa is referred to as having to do with the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna. In this last instance the use of his name has a definite purpose which should not be missed. After the various literary devices have been discarded, and before closing the work, Vyāsa puts his own real signature to the treatise, just as an artist might initial the corner of a painting. Indirectly, he wants to make it clear that all that was reported by Sanjaya to the blind king Dhritarāshtra as actually having transpired objectively, had its original prototype in the words of Vyāsa himself. In other words, if we consider it as a dramatic piece rather than a narrative poem, Vyāsa himself appears before the close of the drama, from behind the drop curtain in which Sanjaya is seen reporting the events of the Mahābhārata war to the king. Vyāsa thus explicitly intends to claim the authorship of the Gita.

GURU CHARACTER OF KRISHNA

It should further be noticed that in the verse (xviii, 74) just preceding the verse mentioned, there is the use of the word *samvāda* (dialogue). That this dialogue was not intended to be merely one between the charioteer Krishna and the warrior Arjuna is made sufficiently clear to the reader as early as ii, 7, where Arjuna refers to himself as a *sishya* or disciple: "I am your disciple, do discipline me coming thus for refuge to you". The Guru is not so directly mentioned there, but only in another context in xi, 43: "You are the supreme Guru"; but given the disciple, the teacher is to be understood. The situation demands him, by implication. Thus, although Krishna is successively a Charioteer, Friend, Adviser, Divine Person or Representative of the Absolute Principle, there is no violation of meaning to call him Guru over and above and inclusive of all the other relationships.

He is not, however, a Guru like Bhīshma or Drona who are referred to as Gurus in *ii, 5, but a Guru in a more absolute* sense. He is called the Lord of Yoga (Yogēshvara) in xviii, 78 which is also not inconsistent with Guruhood Krishna refers to himself as representing the Absolute in its different

aspects in xiv, 3 "My womb is great Brahma—supreme Deity" and xiv, 27 "For I am the basis of the Absolute and the unexpended nectar of immortality, and the eternal way of right conduct, and of lonely final happiness," and in many other places

These indications are more than sufficient to justify our taking the Gita as a dialogue on wisdom between a Guru and his sishya

This dialogue portion occupies the centre of the Gita and covers the greater portion of the work If the Gita is to be compared to a lotus flower (it is called *Bhārata Pankajam*, "Lotus of the Bhārata" in the *Gita Dhyana* already referred to), such a lotus would have many protective petals covering its heart The core of the Gita with its fragrance would represent the dialogue portion set down by the son of Parasāra (Vyāsa) which contains the wisdom of the Absolute stated as revealing itself to the supreme Sun Protecting such a precious teaching are the outer features that accompany the teaching only indirectly, and which refer to the epic's war situation These latter have to be treated as incidental to the Gita teaching, although not to be treated as having nothing to do with the rest or as being totally extraneous to the subject-matter of the Gita

LITERARY DEVICES

How these peripheral chapters are related organically with the central chapters of the Gita will become clearer after we have been able to discuss the internal structure of the Gita as a whole It is sufficient for us to recognize here that there are three different grades of contents in the Gita marked out by the author through literary devices at the beginning and at the end, and even in the middle in chapter xi, of the book

Sanjaya, the charioteer of the blind king Dhritarāshtra speaking to his sire is the front curtain as it were Here the actualities of war are dealt with in the words of Sanjaya This is device or curtain No 1

When the dialogue is between Arjuna as the warrior speaking to Krishna, his relation, or charioteer, a more philosophical or religious attitude is reflected, though still of the relativist order This is device or curtain No 2

Then, when Krishna speaks to Arjuna as a teacher of Absolute Truth after being called a Guru by Arjuna, the

subject matter attains to the purity of the white light of Vedāntic Wisdom in its best sense The Vedanta as presented in the Gita, however, has an original ring which is different from the academic and theoretical versions of later exponents such as Gaudapāda or Sankara, where it is based on states of consciousness only In the Gita it retains its Upanishadic ontological character, closely resembling the later Upanishads such as the Svetashvatara which encompass all life values, ontological and teleological, more comprehensively Where Krishna thus teaches wisdom to Arjuna is the core of the Gita, or device or curtain No 3

How these three curtains are raised or dropped in the actual text has been indicated in detail in the course of our comments on the verses It is unnecessary to refer to them here

There is yet another separation, filtration or elimination to be effected before we arrive at the central, doctrinal core of the Gita Many matters are treated as anterior opinion (*purva paksha*) which must be kept apart from the proper teaching of the Guru This is the first filtration

Then, even in the words of the Guru we have to distinguish between what is referred to as permissive only, coming as it does from the background of the spiritual life of India, which is merely incidental to the discussion, and the independent original teaching This is the second filtration The conclusive teachings are always underlined sufficiently clearly by Vyasa and attributed to the Guru Krishna Such finalized doctrines are further distinguished by certain peculiarities of expression (such as the one in xviii, 6 ' This is my decided and best conviction ') meant for explicit reference by him, and consciously employed We shall refer to these in the body of the commentary

Thus in trying to arrive at the very central core of the teaching of the Gita, we have to keep in mind three curtains and two filtrations, to rid it of all matter extraneous to the teaching proper, and which are like the outer packing protecting its precious inner content

THE ARCHWAY AND FRAMES OF REFERENCE

When all the precautions mentioned above have been taken in trying to arrive at the core of the teaching of the Gita, the careful reader will find there are still kinds, degrees or gradations

of secret teachings alluded to by means of the words of Krishna or Arjuna, whether at the ends or beginnings of chapters Each of the eighteen chapters has a separate frame of reference enshrining a unitive value, within whose four walls the reasoning lives and moves Moreover, the validity of a certain statement even by the Guru Krishna would seem to be contradicted in a different chapter No such contradiction will be found within the same chapter except in the second and last ones where the structure is complex, and where the literary devices and some philosophical considerations tend to mix different points of view The details of such peculiarities of structure will be noted in the commentary and in the section below when we come to deal with the inner structure of the Gita in greater detail Here it is sufficient for us to note that each chapter of the Gita as a rule, should be regarded as a distinct unit, though not as a separate philosophical vision (*darshana*) altogether Each chapter is like a differently shaped stone forming the archway that the total eighteen chapters together may be likened to The early and later chapters have to rest on pillars that touch the ground Hence they are conceived in a more actual matter of fact or earthy spirit, actuality and realism being retained side by side with thorough going Absolutism, as far as they are in keeping with the scheme of contemplative values conceived by the author of the Gita

IMPORTANCE OF THE TWO CENTRAL CHAPTERS

As far as the wisdom teaching is concerned chapters IX and X occupy a key position The end of chapter IX contains that famous verse which we have said sums up the Gita doctrine, and this verse is repeated almost verbatim in XVIII 65, which is the end of the teaching The end of chapter IX is thus the middle of the Gita taken as a whole A careful study of the contents of chapters IX and X will show that they hold many secrets into which we cannot enter in this precursive introduction We should note however that in IX 2 the distinction of this chapter is very openly indicated

> Royal Science Crowning Secret purificatory is this, superior, objectively verifiable conforming to right living, very easy to live, (and) subject to no decrease

The first verse of chapter x likewise refers to the further superiority of the contents of that chapter even to chapter ix

"Again, O Mighty Armed, listen to My supreme Word, which I, desiring your well being, shall tell you, so dear (and favourably disposed)"

When chapter x ends, Arjuna is made by the author to refer backwards (to the two chapters ix and x) in xi, 1, as pretaining to *adhyātma* (having the Self for subject) helping us to determine the status of these two chapters, as intended by the author

"Arjuna said By that speech which has been spoken by you, out of favour for me, the highest secret known as pertaining to the Self, this, my confusion, has vanished"

THE INVISIBLE KEYSTONE

We know that the cosmology of the Upanishads which began with the worship of the phenomenal gods of the Vedas found maturity in the course of the history of thought and arrived at wisdom having its centre in the Self of man The Self was finally equated to the Absolute and spoken of as a supreme Value referred to as *Ānanda* (Happiness)

It is this same central and neutral Value which the Gita places at the core of its teaching in these most centrally placed chapters, ix and x How these two chapters are complementary to each other would require a detailed examination of their contents, a task we have reserved for our commentary on the text itself It is enough here to say that the most valuable contemplative teaching of the Gita should be sought in these central chapters Even here, chapter ix is conceived asymmetrically and negatively, as compared with chapter x, which refers to a more positive aspect of the Absolute

The neutral Absolute is not discussed at all It is left as a numinously silent factor implied or hidden in the two chapters taken together Like the verb in a sentence, the keystone of the Gita arch is almost invisible—an ineffable presence—and left to the intuitive imagination of the seeker for wisdom to realize or experience He is free to see a golden or green leaf which contains the Verb of verbs or the Word of words representing the Absolute as the Self or as a unique Value

between the two chapters as a correlating Principle hidden between them, if he so likes This is as much as to say that the Gita teaching in its essence is the same as that of the *Maha-Vakyas* (great dicta) of the Upanishads and the Vedanta generally Vedism and Rationalism meet in the Gita teaching without conflict, through Dialectics which is the same as Yoga

FUNCTION OF THE LAST CHAPTER

A well known Sanskrit verse of the Mimāmsakas (doctrinal critics) lays down seven *lingas* (indications) by which to determine the subject matter of a *shāstra* (text-book)

> "Commencement and end, repetition, originality, utility, critical discussion and legitimacy of conclusion are the indications in determining the meaning "[1]

The beginning and the end are the two first mentioned among them, and when a statement is repeated many times (*abhyāsa*) that should also be taken to indicate the original contribution or the finalized doctrine of the work The finding and the contribution of the Gita as a whole has therefore to be determined by some similar methodical approach

A careful study of the structure of the last chapter gives up to us many indications of value regarding what is intended to be taught finally in the Gita It is sufficient to note here that the very topics which have concluded chapter IX are found at the conclusion of chapter XVIII Moreover, the reference to *samnyāsa* (renunciation) at the beginning of the last chapter repeats a subject which has found prominent mention quite early in the work in III, 4, V, 1, and VI, 1 and 2 The last chapter returns to the same subject

From the repeated return to the same topic, taken together with the reference to renouncing the world and living a life of begging, mentioned by Arjuna himself as early as II, 5 (which is really the proper beginning of the dialogue), we can discover that the discussion and revaluation of the Gita is round the topic of what constitutes proper renunciation

The last chapter helps us to determine the matter beyond doubt *Tyaga* (relinquishment) is the revised idea that the Gita recommends for the generality of aspirants, although the

[1] *Upakramopasamharau abhyaso purvata phalam*
Arthavadopapatti cha lingam tatparyanirnaye

possibility of full fledged *samnyasa* (renunciation) is not ruled out as in xviii, 49

> He whose reason is unattached in situations, whose Self has been won over, from whom desire has gone, by renunciation (*samnyasa*) he reaches the supreme perfection of transcending action '

As Ramakrishna, the saint of Bengal, is said to have put it, the Gita teaches *tyaga* (relinquishment) and fast repetition of the word Gita (gitagitagita) results in the reversed syllabic formation of the word *tyagi* or *tagi*—as near as is natural to the pronunciation by a Bengali

In the essential wisdom which the Gita teaches in common with the rest of the Upanishads and in its own original revaluation of the notion of that particular contemplative pattern of behaviour known as *samnyasa* (renunciation) we have two of the main contributions of the Gita teaching If to these we add the third item which is the method of attaining to wisdom by establishing a strict bi polar relationship with the Absolute (in ix, 34 and xviii, 65), we would have touched on all the chief items of the teaching that the Gita represents

STRUCTURAL SURVEY OF THE CHAPTERS

In our commentary we have introduced each chapter with prefatory remarks A rapid review of the chapters, however, will help us to arrive at a preliminary precision regarding the structure of each This survey will also help to clarify in advance certain other matters of importance regarding pecu liarities of reasoning, style and construction of the Gita which must be discussed in the remaining part of this introduction

Chapter I The Dialectical Conflict of Arjuna (*Arjuna vishada yoga*) The first curtain is raised in the middle of verse 21, where Arjuna is introduced and asks charioteer Krishna to " stop my chariot right in the middle between the two armies " The second curtain is introduced in the middle of verse 28 and remains to the end of the chapter, when the first curtain drops again No wisdom proper is intended to be discussed here yet regardless of this fact we note that the author does not intend it to be outside the scope of the work It has as respectable a title as the other chapters, being called a Yoga This Yoga does not refer to a state of happiness as should be

expected from the definition of Yoga in the Gita itself— dis affiliation from the context of suffering (vi 23)—but here even referring to agony or unhappiness it is still called a Yoga The agony of Arjuna is not the plight of a coward in the face of imminent danger Note the phases of his despondency beginning with pity and proceeding to philosophical reli gious, and humanitarian considerations—all of a very respectable order Although Krishna laughs at Arjuna in the remain der of the Gita we find no contradiction of Arjuna s opinions but rather a revalued statement of Arjuna s position in abso lutist terms

The only possible fault of Arjuna s attitude lurks in the expression my own people (*svajana*) in verse 28 where he starts his arguments Ancestor worship considerations of caste or clan the non hurting principle and the principle of renunciation are not against the spirit of the Gita as a whole But Arjuna thinks as a relativist in these matters while Krishna teaches an absolutist revision of them

The first chapter is thus the only one which contains the problems of the Gita stated correctly before the discussion by the Guru Krishna This chapter therefore requires the closest attention And yet oddly enough commentators even like Sankara have almost ignored it or even treated it as super fluous Sankara s commentary begins only with verse 10 of chapter ii and he dismisses what precedes in a summary fashion not at all in proportion with the rest of his labours The remaining seventeen chapters of the Gita make an attempt to dialectically revalue these same problems It is therefore very important not to leave unnoticed even those minor peculiarities of this chapter in which the author hides here and there certain indications for the guidance of the intelligent reader

We should note that a secondary literary device consisting of Duryodhana the ruler speaking to Drona the Vedic type of Guru and reporting himself to Bhishma the patriarchal type of Guru is found between verses 2 and 12 hidden as it were as a device No 1 (*a*) within the device No 1 of Sanjaya The object must be to bring out the contrast existing even in the relativist and actual world of this impending battle Vedic values referring to the way of the shining phenomenal gods (*deva yana*) have to be contrasted with ancestral values referring to the way of the forefathers (*pitri yana*) and Duryodhana as the chief goes from Drona to Bhishma who respectively

represent these sets of values King Duryodhana needs Sanjaya's enumeration of the names of heroes for purposes of clear classified recognition (*samjnartham*) as stated in verse 7, *i e*, to relate the contending parties to the sets of values which each represents

Contemplation is not different from commonsense in its keenness of the sense of the actual Lazy indifference to actuality is not the kind of mysticism upheld in the Gita This secondary device underlines the need for seeing things as they actually are before the contemplative life is recommended, so that no escapism may be implied in the teaching This attitude is further evident in the qualification "expert" (*daksha*) as applied to a yogi in xii, 16, which is again found in xviii, 43 included among the virtues of a true fighter

Verses 13 to 20 describe the actualities of the war situation again as seen by Sanjaya according to curtain device No 1 Verses 21 to 28 continue curtain device No 1, and when curtain device No 2 is revealed in the middle of verse 28 it continues to the end of the chapter At the end of this section Arjuna attains to a state of intransigeance rather than in the state of pity with which he began He throws away the bow and arrow instead of merely letting the bow slip from his hands (verse 30) The feeling of pity which was vague is backed by a definite attitude which leads into the maturely formulated dilemma, to ripen further into the dialectically formulated doubt brought out in the next chapter Only after all these stages does Arjuna become qualified, according to the secret scheme of the author, to call himself a disciple of the Guru Krishna

This chapter, therefore, is meant to indicate the nature of Arjuna's spiritual agony which, by the end of the chapter, attains the status of a religious conflict based on sin Arjuna's scruples are vague, but they still have the strength and virility of a representative sceptic of his time As the anterior prerequisite for the whole teaching to follow, Arjuna's conflict deserves to be treated as a Yoga

Chapter ii Unitive Reasoning (*Samkhya Yoga*) The Sanjaya curtain device No 1 opens with verse 1, but in verse 2 the second curtain device appears where the dialogue between the charioteer Krishna and the friend is given This continues up to verse 9 where the first curtain drops for a moment, to be raised again in verse 11 Arjuna has now been able to formulate his doubt properly to form the anterior sceptic's

position which Krishna begins to answer seriously The actual teaching of the Gita pertains to wisdom from this point Practical wisdom is added on after chapter ix only What is most significant here is that Krishna gains the full status of a Guru after the discipleship of Arjuna has been expressed by him in verse 7 Arjuna s doubt is given the same rank as that of a Nachiketas or a Svetaketu of the Upanishads Curtain device No 3 is thus revealed from verse 11

In passing we should particularly note verse 39 where there is a change over from the two sections of this chapter, from the first part called *Samkhya buddhi* (Rationalism revalued) to the second part, called *Yoga buddhi* (Unitive discipline rationalized), a change-over which has been missed in most commentaries but which is one of vital importance to the understanding of the method and teaching of the Gita Although internally divided into these two sections the title Samkhya Yoga (Unitive Reasoning) is justified Samkhya (Rationalism) when treated unitively attains the status of a yoga and *Buddhi* (Pure Reason) when employed to reconcile counterparts also attains the same Yoga status That Samkhya and Yoga are the same has been plainly stated in v 4 and 5

> That Samkhya (Rationalism) and Yoga (Unitive Self-discipline) are distinct only children say not the well-informed (pandits) one well established in any one of them obtains the result of both
>
> That status attained by men of Samkhya (Rationalist persuasion) is reached also by those of the Yoga (Unitive Self-disciplined persuasion) Samkhya and Yoga as one—he who thus sees he (alone) sees

Chapter iii The Unitive Way of Action (*Karma Yoga*) From this chapter to xi 9 curtain device No 1 is abandoned This is to indicate that it is idealistic perceptual or conceptual aspects of wisdom alone as opposed to practical objective or actual features of reality that have been included within these limits This chapter treats of Necessity in the form of an urge to action in life prompted by desire as a negative yet imperative or eternal value in human life Verse 41 refers to desire as the enemy A person under the sway of desire is condemned at the end of chapter xvi In that chapter as here, desire is named as the enemy Here it is to be fought by Arjuna within his own nature there in chapter xvi the man

of desire is to be punished by an angry god, representing the Absolute conceived dualistically. In that later chapter the corrective principle is spoken of as an outside factor, while it resides, though also dualistically, within the nature of Arjuna himself, in chapter III. The explanation of this difference will be clearer as we examine the other chapters where the author's architectural design becomes manifest. Here meanwhile, action is raised to the status of a supreme Necessity, as in its symmetrically placed counterpart, chapter XVI.

Chapter IV. Unitive Wisdom (*Jnāna-Yoga*): This chapter belongs to the curtain device No. 3. Whereas the last chapter gave primacy to action in the form of Necessity with a capital N, this chapter shows a complete turnabout by giving primacy to wisdom in its concluding verses. This apparent adoption of two opposing standpoints in two adjacent chapters will be explained when, in the next chapter, the unitively revalued attitude to Sāmkhya (Rationalism) and Yoga (Unitive Self-discipline) is stated in emphatic terms, as we quoted above, under Chapter II.

The wisdom referred to in this chapter is not plain knowledge arising out of reason in the logical sense, but a timeless or unitive wisdom belonging to the context of the Absolute. In the last verse it is disclosed that there is still a victory to be won by the wise man against his own ignorance. The actual enemy was subjectively referred to in Chapter III. Here the enemy has a more theoretical status. Actual fighting is not referred to at all, but a positive attitude is given to Arjuna to "stand firm in the unitive way (yoga) and stand up, O Bhārata (Arjuna)!" in verse 42. Thus the call to actual warfare fades off into the background as the chapter-stones in the archway we have spoken of are placed nearer to the crowning keystone.

Chapter V. Unitive Action and Renunciation (*Karma-Samnyāsa-Yoga*): Yoga as a practical discipline is all that is alluded to as action here. Supreme peace is the note on which this chapter ends. To obey Krishna, it is hardly necessary for Arjuna to stir from his posture of sitting.

Chapter VI. Unitive Contemplation (*Dhyāna-Yoga*): This chapter finally arrives at treating the subject of Yoga as a personal discipline. In verse 6:

"The Self is dear to one (possessed) of Self, by whom even the Self by the Self has been won, for one not (possessed)

of Self, the Self would be in conflict with the very Self, as if an enemy"

The two selves mentioned implies giving equal and opposite status to the contingent and the necessary aspects of the personality. The avoidance of conflict between the actor and the action is the yoga here Yoga is a unitive discipline wherein opposing tendencies in life are cancelled out in the neutrality of the Absolute Verses 20 to 23, where happiness is stressed and disconnection is defined as Yoga, are a revaluation of the Yoga more dualistically treated by Patanjali and others The question of any social duties does not even remotely arise here.

Chapter VII. The Unitive Way of Wisdom-Synthesis (*Jnana-Vijnāna-Yoga*) The synthesis of subjective and objective attributes of the Absolute, without any trace of duality between them, is the peculiarity of this fully philosophical chapter. These aspects of the Absolute, distinguished as "higher" and "lower" are referred to in verses 4 and 5.

> "Earth, water, fire, air, sky, mind, reason also, and consciousness of individuality, thus here divided is my eightfold nature
>
> "This is the non-transcendental (*apara*=immanent). Know the other to be My nature, which is transcendental, constituting life, O Mighty-Armed (Arjuna), by which the phenomenal world is sustained"

The synthesis is clear from verse 24

> "Unreasoning persons consider Me as the unmanifest come to manifestation, not knowing My supreme (Value), unexpended, with no superior"

The subjects covered in this chapter are indicated in the last verse (30)

> "Those who know Me, taking together what refers to existential (*adhibhuta*), hypostatic (*ādhidaiva*) and sacrificial aspects (*adhiyajna*), they know Me in a unitive spirit, even at the time of their departure"

The purely philosophical and non-social nature of the teaching of the Gita becomes more and more evident as we

approach the central chapters No bow and arrow or even "standing up" is required of Arjuna here!

Chapter VIII The Unitive Way in General Spiritual Progress (*Akshara-Brahma-Yoga*): The fighting referred to in verse 7 of this chapter

> "Therefore at all times remember Me and fight when your mind and intelligence are surrendered to Me, you shall come to Me, (have) no doubt."

has been made a secondary matter to the contemplation of the Absolute Some vestige of the necessary aspects of life might still cling to a person who might have attained to the wisdom of the Absolute Such a vestigial factor makes the path of the aspirant tend to the dark or bright ways mentioned in verse 26

> "These, the white and the black, are known to be in this world the twin perennial paths, by one of them one attains to non return, while by the other one comes back."

Yet, in spite of this reference to two paths leading to worlds dark or bright, this chapter is a purely spiritually conceived one, leading to unitive values in the next two chapters But before coming to them, this chapter answers many theoretical questions synthetically

Chapter IX Unitive Contemplation as a Royal Science and Crowning Secret (*Raja Vidya Raja Guhya-Yoga*) The pure, neutral and impersonal Absolute to be thought of as the highest of Values in spiritual or contemplative life is clearly evident from verses 4 and 5

> ' By Me all this world is pervaded, My form unmanifested, all beings have existence in Me and I do not have existence in them
>
> And further, beings do not exist in Me, behold My status as a divine Mystery further, Myself remaining that Urge behind beings I bear them but do not exist in them either"

This should be read with verse 11 in the first instance

> "The foolish misunderstand Me because of My adopting the human form, ignorant as they are of My being that is beyond, as the Lord of all beings '

and with the series of verses from verse 13 to 19

"But those of Great Self, O Partha (Arjuna), affiliated to *My divine nature*, adore with mind exclusive of all extraneous interests, having known Me as the Unexpended Primal Source of all beings

"Always singing praises of Me, ever striving, firm in vows and saluting Me devotedly, they are ever united in worshipful attendance

"Others also, sacrificing with the wisdom sacrifice, unitively, dualistically, as also in many ways facing universally everywhere, worshipfully attend on Me

'I the ritual action, I the sacrifice, I the ancestral oblation, I the potent medicinal herb, I the holy formula, I also the melted butter, I the fire, I the offering

"I the Father of this world, the Mother, the Supporter, and the Grandsire (Ancestor), the Holy One that is to be known, the Purifier, the syllable AUM, as also the (Vedas called) *Rik*, *Sama* and *Yajus*

'(I) the Goal, the Supporter, the Lord, the Witness, the Abode, the Refuge, the Friend, the Becoming, the Dissolution, and Ground of being ontological Basis, and never-expended Seed

'I radiate heat (and) I rain, I withhold and I send forth, I am immortality and death, as also being and non being, O Arjuna'

This series enumerates all possible contemplative values, ending with that neutral Absolute which is both existing and non existing (*sat* and *asat*) Not only is the Absolute free from all taint of action, but the status of the worshipper and the worshipped here becomes equal, as verse 29 puts it

'I (regard) all beings equally To Me there is none hateful or dear They however who worship with devotion, they are in Me and I too am in them'

There is a note of hope for all irrespective of any conduct or class of society as stated in verses 30 and 31

"Even if one of very evil actions should worship Me with a devotion exclusive of all else, he should be accounted to

be good all the same merely by the fact that he has a properly settled determination

"Instantaneously he becomes established in his own right nature and enters into eternal peace Believe Me in all confidence, O Son of Kunti (Arjuna) that one affiliated to Me with fidelity knows no destruction"

Social obligations are declared to be not binding on any body at all in the next verse (32)

"They too who resort to Me for refuge, O Pārtha (Arjuna), whoever they might be, (whether) women, workers (*shudras*), as well as farmer merchants (*vaishyas*), (all) of sinful origin, they too attain to the supreme Goal"

Verse 34 gives that secret code indication that the first half of the discussion of contemplative wisdom is over A scanning of the items of values implied in verses 16 to 19 inclusive (given above) will, however reveal, that more objective or positive values are reserved for the next chapter, where the specialized aspects of the Absolute overtly intruding into the visible world of values (though only partially representative of the Absolute universal Principle) are enumerated This chapter may thus be considered "negative subjective" compared with the next chapter which becomes "positive-objective" The later chapters maintain this positive character to a greater and greater degree

Chapter x The Unitive Recognition of Positive Values (*Vibhuti-Yoga*) We have now passed the zenith of the teaching of the Gita Here objective values of the nature of presences or numinous factors still of a contemplative rather than of a public or socialized order are enumerated first Verses 4 and 5 have the complete series of the innermost of contemplative values which could also be virtues

"Reason wisdom, non delusion, patience, truth, self-restraint, calmness, pleasure-pain, becoming- and non becoming, sense of danger security

"Non hurting, balance, contentment, austerity, benevolence, fame shame, are the various distinct attitudes arising from Me alone"

The overt aspects of the contemplative presences are enumerated in the latter half of the chapter The Absolute has an urge, a force of becoming, exerting its pressure on the flux of life This creative becoming in its most potent expression has three grades which are called "having specific character (*vibhutimat*)", "having value here and now (*shrimat*)", and "expressing a radical stability (*urjitam*)" This last named aspect of the Absolute, which emerges again in XIV, 27, is the foundation aspect from which the notions of justice and duty have their source

Chapter XI The Unitive Vision of the Absolute (*Vishvarupa-Darshana Yoga*) Leaving "objective" behind, a bolder, yet positively objective vision of the Absolute is given in three different sub-sections in this chapter There is the Sanjaya version of Arjuna's vision which belongs to curtain device No 1, and there is also the vision as seen by Arjuna which belongs to curtain device No 2, and there is the vision as explained by Krishna which belongs to curtain device No 3 or the wisdom-discourse proper, the *samvāda*

Arjuna's request for a vision of a theological deity (in the conventional device No 1 relativist context of a Sanjaya) *is significantly not granted* by Krishna He prefers to assume his ordinary form after discarding the vision aspect, thus *ruling out* a theistic god from the Gita teaching altogether Arjuna himself wavers between the status of a contemplative disciple and that of a mere friend of Krishna as revealed in verse 41

What we should by no means fail to notice in this chapter is that the author goes out of his way to introduce curtain device No 1 in referring to the terrible and destructive aspect of the Absolute It is the actual warfare that is terrible and not the idea of it When Krishna refers to himself as representing time, it is not pure Time that is meant, but actual time, like that kept by a ticking clock. Actual time is filled with terrible events which need not terrify a wise man at all who is capable of looking at the same Time in a more conceptual or purer manner

When Krishna refers to himself as engaged in the destruction of the people it is the actuality of war that is portrayed in a lively and imaginative manner Arjuna is asked to be only the incidental outward cause of the killing Because even this encouragement to incidental or pretended fighting as seen in verse 30 belongs only to the Sanjaya or curtain device No 1, it need not be taken as belonging to the serious

philosophical doctrine of the Gita The epic canvas has cruder necessary features which do not and are not meant by the author to belong to the contemplative picture that he wishes to paint thereon

The need for introducing Sanjaya in the middle of the chapter thus becomes justified and necessary to explain the nature of the subject under reference The concluding verse of the chapter marks the return to the normal contemplative style of the Gita Values like devotion and non hatred, which are again introduced, have nothing in common with the spirit of the battlefield

Chapter xii Unitive Devotion and Contemplation (*Bhakti-Yoga*) This chapter has no reference to warlike attitudes at all, but refers to two degrees of contemplative life, the personal and the impersonal, of which the former is easy but inferior and the latter difficult but superior Curtain device No 3 of normal dialogue continues unbroken from here till we reach almost the end of the Gita, where Sanjaya alone comes on the stage again in xviii, 74 All the teaching to that point has thus to be taken as belonging to the contemplative order

Chapter xiii Unitive Understanding of the Distinction between the Actual and the Perceptual (*Kshetra-Kshetrajna-Vibhaga-Yoga*) This chapter is devoted to methodology and epistemology The "actual" and the "perceptual" aspects of the Absolute should never be mixed up in the mind of the contemplative if he is to be able to recognize higher contemplative values Verse 26 enunciates the law that all beings are born of the union of these two aspects

The *Kshetra* (the actual field) and the *Kshetrajna* (the perceptual Knower of the field) are dialectical counterparts, first to be distinguished but later to be equated one with the other to make the Paramount Spirit of chapter xv emerge

Chapter xiv The Unitive Way of Transcending the Three Nature-Modalities (*Guna Traya Vibhāga-Yoga*) In ii, 45 Arjuna was asked to discard the Vedas because they had to do with the three *gunas* or modalities of nature How have they become in the present chapter so respectable in the eyes of Vyāsa? The answer is that here the *gunas* are used more as symbols or signs of a diagnostic nature for the comparison of contemplative values after the synthesis between the higher and lower notions of the Absolute has been sufficiently explained

The last verse here makes it clear that it is the foundation aspect of the Absolute which is given prime place, belonging

(fighter) could be one of demoniac endowment. Arjuna, being a disciple of Krishna in the wisdom context, is admitted to the higher group. The greater part of this chapter is devoted to the strong condemnation of the person with demoniac endowments. Duryodhana perhaps comes under this category, at least in so far as he is not affiliated to Absolute wisdom but only to relativist notions of religious holiness or life values.

Chapter XVII. The Unitive Recognition of the Three Patterns of Faith (*Shraddha-Traya-Vibhāga Yoga*). That the personality of man is determined by what he believes is the dictum (verse 3) on which this chapter is based. The good, indifferent and bad forms of faith are graded and discussed here under the categories of faith which are mainly sacrifice, austerity and offering (or giving). All three types are discussed finally as conforming to the most sacred of patterns known in India, whether in the context of the Vedas or of the larger Upanishadic teaching of the Vedanta based on the great philosophic aphorism (*Maha Vakya*) AUM-TAT-SAT ("Aum—That is Real"). Religion and philosophy are equated here. Religion consists of philosophy and philosophy consists of religion. The contemplative personality of man has its character fixed by the supreme faith in the Absolute at three levels represented by the secret meaning of the *Mahā-Vakya* above. AUM represents affiliation to the Absolute, TAT represents freedom from benefit motive, and SAT the Reality that is basic and goodness in general. Dedication to the Absolute becomes confirmed at three levels to determine the perfected type of spiritual man who is to be discussed in the final chapter.

Chapter XVIII. The Unitive Way in Behaviour Patterns (*Sannyasa Yoga*). This last chapter has two different grades of conclusions to arrive at. First there is the particular conclusion resulting from the discussion *after* chapter IX (which concluded already the theoretical discussion of contemplative philosophy without its applied aspects) and secondly, there is a general conclusion belonging to the whole work, dealing with applied aspects and reaching the discussion of actual patterns of behaviour. Even here no social obligation is involved, but only an intelligent and free recognition by oneself of what one's own personality fits one to play a particular role in life, on a given or particular occasion.

Arjuna is a free man having divine endowments and already aware of the theoretical implications of wisdom of the most secret kind. Necessary action in the form of patterns of

behaviour each implying its own personal attitude is already there *in the world that Arjuna is facing* As in the case of faith that is ready made with its own patterns of sacrifice austerity and offering so at that historical epoch in India there were ready made moulds of available patterns of behaviour such as that of the renouncer (*samnyasi*) the relinquisher (*tyagi*) and those statically codified patterns well known as the *brahmana* (priest) the *kshattriya* (fighter) the *vaishya* (businessman) and the *shudra* (worker) Each of these static forms of rigid obligatory religious tradition is here taken up by Vyasa and boldly revalued Neither heredity nor the dead weight of obligation statically and narrowly conceived are allowed to vitiate the question of the free choice of models of active life from the available range open to every man

When the concluding position has been brought to this important and still philosophical question of matching inner and outer factors in life there is still left the particular case of Arjuna on the battlefield to which such a theory is to be applied

The Gita takes up the challenge of referring even to the problem of Arjuna in philosophical and contemplative terms Firmness on a battlefield is a value that could be brought within the contemplative order as seen in verses 33 and 43

> The firmness by which the activities of the mind vital functions and the senses O Partha (Arjuna) are kept from deflecting (from the true path) by Yoga is pure (*sattvik*)
>
> Prowess brightness firmness skill and also never absconding generosity and dignity of men refer to the (pattern of) activity of the *kshattriya* born of his own nature

The happiness of a warrior who has done what he should normally do on a given occasion is also another similarly contemplative value as precious as life itself to one whole heartedly affiliated to the Absolute as mentioned in verse 36 Just as in the case of a would be mother caught in the labours of child birth it would be futile and absurd at the last moment not to permit her by wrong philosophy of any kind to obstruct her free fulfilment of her particular life activity at that particular moment so Arjuna is advised by Krishna not to have false scruples of a negative order in fully living according to the pattern of life meant for him by nature and

circumstances which are in his case of an absolutely imperative character. He is still treated as a free man in verse 63:

> "Thus has wisdom more secret than all that is secret been declared to you by Me; (critically) scrutinizing all, omitting nothing, *do as you like*."

Vyāsa takes care to put the reply of Arjuna at the very limit of the part which belongs to the dialogue. The very next verse brings in the epic context in which Sanjaya enters again. Whether Arjuna's obedience of Krishna led to killing on the part of Arjuna, is not stated in the Gita, as such a subject would not be respectable within a contemplative text. Moreover, in an extra section ranging from verses 50 to 53 Vyasa opens up the possibility of a pattern of life for Arjuna which would be quite outside the harsh context of war, if Arjuna liked to avoid it. This alternative course, which is more truly contemplative, further proves that social obligations are not binding on Arjuna any more than they are binding generally in the wisdom context. Contemplation belongs to the domain of contingent freedom and not to the necessary obligations of the spiritual life of man.

In keeping with the two trends of the discussion, one more quietly contemplative, and the other more overtly or actively contemplative, we have two different grades of secrets referred to in verses 63 and 64. We have already quoted verse 63 above. Verse 64 says:

> "Listen again to My supreme Word, the most secret of all. . ."

These two lines of contemplative life come to a grand conclusion in that famous verse 65 repeated almost verbatim from IX, 34, which brings the Gita teaching to its supreme culminating point:

> "Become one in mind with Me: be devoted to Me; sacrifice to Me, bow down to Me; you shall come to Me alone; I promise you (in) truth; you are dear to Me".

The non-religious and non-obligatory character of the Gita as a whole is evident from verse 66 where the Absolute is given primacy over all other considerations in contemplative

or spiritual life, which in the Gita is meant to be free and open, while yet offering the highest hope for man

"Abandoning all duties, come to Me, the One, for refuge I shall absolve you from all sins, do not despair!"

THE TERMINAL DESCRIPTION OF EACH CHAPTER

Every chapter of the Gita has at its end what corresponds to a terminal chapter description (not strictly a colophon)[1] which indicates clearly that it is a particular "yoga" giving primacy to one unitive notion pertaining to the wisdom of the Absolute by means of a dialogue which, of course, is that between Krishna the Guru and Arjuna the disciple The terms *Brahma Vidya* (wisdom science of the Absolute), *Yoga-Shastra* (scientific textbook of contemplative discipline), *Krishna Arjuna samvada* (dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna) and the naming of the *Bhagavad Gita* (Song of God) and its qualification as a series of Upanishads—Vedic philosophical instructions—in the plural, are expressions common to every such terminal chapter description

It is legitimate to expect from this description which belongs to the work itself as handed down at present that (1) the *Bhagavad Gita* is an Upanishad series (2) that it treats of the wisdom of the Absolute, (3) that it is in the form of a dialogue wherein anterior opinion is revalued in terms of finalized knowledge and (4) above all that it is a Yoga Shastra, i e a systematic and exactly conceived text in the science concerning contemplation

We have already shown how the work is a song and given justification for most of the other descriptions enumerated above It remains to examine its claims to be an exact science dealing with Yoga

A TEXTBOOK ON YOGA

As we have seen the Gita does not employ reasoning or arguments of the usual ratiocinative or discursive type Though it has seemingly much in common with schools of philosophy such as that of the Samkhyas (who in turn had much of their

[1] *ity shrimad bhagavad-g ta- upan shatsu brahma vidyayam yoga shastre sri krishna-arjuna samvade*

own method depending on the Nyāya-Vaiseshika school), the logic of the Gita in many respects is its own It is not altogether its own, but has a very ancient or rather perennial tradition behind it The author Vyāsa himself is aware of this when, in the words of Krishna, he says

"Thus handed down the line in succession, this (wisdom) the King Sages (*Raja-Rishis*) understood, by great lapse of time here (however), this intuitive wisdom (*yoga*) came to be lost, O Paramtapa (Arjuna)" IV, 12

there is a yet more direct reference to Sāmkhya in XVIII, 13

Each chapter of the Gita being a yoga and the conflict of Arjuna being itself called a yoga in the first chapter, it is easy to see that the word yoga is used in the Gita in a very extended, comprehensive and exactly conceived sense It is not limited to Patanjali Yoga and the familiar states of progression in yogic practice mentioned in Patanjali's *Yoga-Sutras* are glaringly absent in the Gita The Gita has its own definitions and implied descriptions of persons of yogic perfection here and there all over the work which distinguishes the unique, secret and special character of the yoga meant in the Gita beyond all doubt It is a perennial way of wisdom based on intuitive reasoning, covering practical and theoretical aspects of contemplative life, in which the method consists of equalizing counterparts of an argument or situation, e g

"Arjuna said That yoga you have outlined as consisting of sameness, O Madhusudana (Krishna) " VI, 33

Yoga has an ascent and a descent as mentioned in VI, 3

'The yoga of a man of self control who is still an aspirant for it, is said to have action as its motive-principle (*karana*), for the same person, when he has ascended to the unitive state (of yoga), tranquillity is said to be its motive-principle"

The secret of yoga which is to be learnt from very rare philosophers is alluded to in IV, 34

"Learn this by prostration, by searching questioning and by service, they will instruct you (duly) in wisdom, those wise men who can see the basic principles."

The rarity, value and extreme secrecy which yoga in the Gita is meant to imply finds profuse mention all over the work Even to desire to know of yoga promotes a man beyond the Vedic Absolute, as claimed in VI, 44

"By the former practice itself he is drawn on though disabled, as one merely desiring to know of yoga, he transcends the Absolute of sound (*shabda Brahma*)"

That Samkhya and Yoga have much in common or almost all in common, is to be inferred from v, 4 and 5[1] The doctrinal or philosophical aspects of yoga as understood in the Gita are the same as found in the ancient writings of the *rishis* (seers) including the *Brahma Sutras*, presumably of Badarayana-Vyasa as stated in XIII, 4

'Sung by Rishis (seers) in many ways, severally and distinctly, in (different) metres, and also in the aphoristic words of the Brahma Sutras replete with critical reasonings and positively determined'

Further, yoga is also spoken of as the cause or source of the emergence of entities such as the manifestation of the Absolute itself Yoga and *maya* are almost interchangeable terms in such expressions as *Yoga Maya* (VII, 25) and *Ātma Maya* (IV, 6) Krishna as representing the Absolute is also referred to as Yogeshvara (the Lord representing the Principle of Yoga)

THE MEANING OF DIALECTICS AND YOGA

The relation that exists between dialectics as in Parmenides and Zeno in the West and the methodology and epistemology proper to Yoga as understood in its wide range of uses and implications indicated above has already been mentioned Yoga here however in the Gita combines religion and philosophy, cosmology and psychology austerities and dispositions To match a proper occupation to a corresponding person is also within the scope of yoga as seen in the last chapter From the extreme idealism or rationalism of the early chapters to the pragmatism or realism of the last chapters yoga is

[1] *Vide* p 33

employed as a common method or correlating epistemologic factor

The author of the Gita is not to blame if the idea of yog is still vague in the mind of the reader He has taken care t explain sufficiently clearly even in the early chapters wha yoga as used by him implies Yoga is a dialectical approac to contemplative life and, as such, is concerned with persona spiritual emancipation through the appreciation of all unitiv values that normally have a place in human life

The pre-Socratic philosophers who used dialectics may o may not have had such a personal emancipation in view, bu in Plato's *Republic* (534) we come to passages in which dialec tic is referred to as a hymn which

> " is a strain of the intellect only When a person starts on the discovery of the Absolute by the light of the reason only, without the assistance of the senses, and never desists until by pure intelligence he arrives at the perception of the Absolute Good, he at last finds himself at the end of the intellectual world as in the case of sight at the end of the visible Dialectic then, is the coping stone of the sciences, and is set over them, it would not be right to place any other science higher, the nature of knowledge can not further go "[1]

That even Plato envisaged spiritual value factors within the scope of the use of dialectics is evident from his words (*Republic*, 533)

> " Dialectic alone carries back its hypotheses to the first principle of all in order to make her ground secure, the eye of the soul, which is literally buried in an outlandish slough, is by her gentle aid lifted upwards, and she uses as handmaids and helpers in the work of conversion the sciences we have been discussing "[1]

A GARLAND OF VALUES

The Neo Platonic philosopher Plotinus employed this method of dialectics almost as in the Gita, unitively bringing together matter and spirit In modern times Bergson also understood and employed dialectics in developing his metaphysical ideas

[1] from the Jowett translation.

Thus we would be in good company still when we say that dialectics is a secret time honoured way of perennial mysticism or philosophy which is based on intuition rather than reason. It yields unitive results consisting of values *in life ranging from* the most commonplace to the highest.

All values in life could be strung by dialectics into a garland of human values, each precious in its own context The eighteen chapters of the Gita string together different values in life through its own notion of the Absolute —the Absolute being the correlating Principle as mentioned in VII, 7

> "In Me all this is strung as a classified series (*ganah*) of precious beads on a string"

A sample of the dialectical method of reasoning is given by Vyasa in that symmetrically balanced verse II, 16

> "What is unreal cannot have being and non being cannot be real the conclusion in regard to both of these has *been known to philosophers*"

This method and the three definitions of yoga in the following verses taken together is meant to explain what the word yoga means in the Gita

> "Engage in activity, O Dhanamjaya (Arjuna), taking your stand on the unitive way (*of yoga*) *discarding attachments* and capable of regarding both attainment and non-attainment as the same in sameness consists the unitive way (of yoga)" II, 48
>
> "Affiliated to reason one leaves behind here both meritorious and unmeritorious deeds Therefore affiliate yourself to the unitive way (of yoga) yoga is reason in action, (*savoir faire*, know-how)" II, 50
>
> "That should be known by the name of yoga—disaffiliation from the context of suffering Such a yoga should be adhered to with determination, free from spiritual regret" VI, 23

Yoga refers to the Absolute and yields unitive interests in every department of *life It implies detachment from the* outside world of sense activity

UNITIVE CONCEPTS OF EACH CHAPTER

That each chapter should be looked upon as having its own frame of reference has been explained already Here we shall mention some of the further peculiarities of chapter construction, beginning with the unitive concepts of each chapter

Chapter 1 The counterparts here are the values represented by Bhishma and Bhima, both of whom are prehistoric stalwarts Verse 10 brings them together

> "This army of ours which is under the care of Bhishma is insufficient but that army of theirs which is under the care of Bhima is adequate"

In the sub section of this chapter where Duryodhana speaks to Drona and Bhishma, the two sets of religious values represented by each of them are the counterparts to be unitively revalued from the Absolutist point of view Both of these are referred to clearly in II, 4

> "Arjuna said How could I, O Slayer of Madhu (Krishna) encounter with arrows in battle Bhishma and also Drona who are worthy of worship, O Slayer of Foes (Krishna)?"

and even in I, 8

> "You and Bhishma and Karna, and also Kripa, the Victor in war, Ashvatthaman and Vikarna and also the son of Somadatta"

At the end of the chapter these two value representatives have to be fought by Arjuna who is about to be taught by Krishna Verses 21 and 24 make pointed reference to placing the chariot in the middle "between the two armies,' and in verse 27 to the two armies taken together "in both the armies'

That the revaluation is dialectical and neutrally poised between opposing standpoints as in the example which is given in II 16, is hinted at even in this first chapter The con flict of Arjuna has the same contemplative or yogic character, though taking the form of an agony for the present within the limits of this chapter The very first word of the Gita is *dharma* (right life that is in keeping with wisdom) which is to be set off against the merely historical actuality of the Kuru

battlefield The latter has to be revalued in terms of the form er by the battle about to begin Absolute Necessity or Urgency in the Actual has to be understood in the light of the highest Absolute sense of intelligent and normal living by Arjuna He is called upon to be a man of unitive life without conflict, which is that of a yogi

Chapter II The unitive concept is now Reason Reason in contemplative life has an anterior tradition in the school known as Samkhya There is a more pragmatic tradition of yoga discipline It is more orthodox Both these kinds of reasoning are stated in revised terms in the two parts of this chapter which is divided by verse 39

> 'What has just been taught is reason according to Samkhya, but hear now of the same according to Yoga, attaining to the unity of which reasoning you will be able to throw off the bondage of works'

Both these counterparts which are based on an ontological or a here and now approach to life, are revalued and restated in terms of what is called the *Brahma sthithi* (state of reasoning established in the Absolute) referred to in the last verse of the chapter

> 'This is the state of being in the Absolute, O Partha (Arjuna), on reaching which one suffers from delusion no more Established in this at the very last moments of life, one reaches that final state of pure being (*nirvana*) in the Absolute

Chapter III Here a revised and eternal status is first given to Necessary Action Action is inevitable to man Its tradition is also hoary as hinted in verse 20

> 'Janaka and such others reached perfection even per forming acts'

Necessary Action is unavoidable and absolutely necessary It has to be met by a factor which is even beyond the ontological reasoning of the Samkhyas and the Yogis of the earlier chapter This is indicated in the last verse of this chapter where a neutral immobilization of spirit is recommended

"Thus knowing Him to be beyond reason, immobilizing the Self by the Self, O Mighty-Armed (Arjuna), kill that enemy in the form of desire (so) difficult to encounter."

Chapter IV: This chapter shows that secret, perennial and timeless wisdom can treat action and inaction as its counterparts and thus cancel, neutralize, equate or harmonize one by the other by the true technique of yoga, as in verse 18:

"One who is able to see action in inaction and inaction in action, he, among men, is intelligent; he is one of unitive way (a yogi), while still engaged in every (possible) kind of work."

This is a rare secret, as mentioned in verse 34:

"Learn this by prostration, by searching questioning, and by service; they will instruct you (duly) in wisdom, those wise men who can see the basic principles."

Action in this chapter has no reference to actual action, but has a perennial symbolic value which was developed in the previous chapter. This is evident from the implication of the last verses read together:

"For one of unitively-renounced action (by yoga), who by wisdom has sundered doubts, and come to full self-possession, works can no more bind him, O Dhanamjaya (Arjuna).

"Therefore, sundering with the sword of Self-Knowledge this ignorance-born doubt residing in your heart, stand firm in the unitive way (yoga) and stand up, O Bhārata (Arjuna)".

Chapter V: Here the anti-ritual rationalist who resorts to quietism is treated as the counterpart of an active contemplative who is able to treat Reason on a par with Action. The edge of action is taken off and the actor even goes to the extent of being able to deny the actuality of action:

"'I do nothing at all'—saying thus, he of unitive ways, who is a philosopher (too), should think and, (while) seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, going, sleeping, breathing, speaking, excreting, grasping, opening and closing the

eyes, treating the senses to be (merely) related to their (corresponding) sense objects" (v, 8, 9)

The action in the Self is countered by the wisdom in the Self and thus is transcended In other words, action is raised to the status of ignorance. Peace results from such a harmony established between the counterparts of Action and Reason, as seen in verse 29

"Having known Me as the Enjoyer of ritual sacrifices, the Acceptor of austerities, the great Lord of all worlds, and the Friend of all beings, one reaches peace"

Chapter VI There is here more than neutrality maintained between Activity and Reason Action as 'means" must have corresponding "ends" in the form of benefits, results, or "fruits" called *karma-phalam* (resulting benefit of an act). When the actor's Self is self sufficient without this benefit, we again attain to a neutralized state which is the state of harmony or yoga Arjuna refers to the balancing of counterparts in this kind of yoga in verse 33 "That yoga you have outlined as consisting of sameness "

That yoga involves practice or an ascent of some sort is implied in verse 3 (quoted earlier on page 46) The essentials of the practice in which the counterparts are the Self and the Self without interference with any horizontal factor called benefit motive (*phala*) and resulting in a Self that is unitive and without conflict is implied in verses 29 to 32

"One whose Self is united by yoga sees the Self as abiding in all beings and all beings as abiding in the Self, everywhere seeing the same

"He who sees Me everywhere, and sees everything in Me, to him I am not lost, and he is not lost to Me

"That yogi who honours Me as abiding in all beings, established in unity, remaining as he may, in every (possible) way, he abides in Me

"By establishing an analogy with the Self, he who sees equality everywhere O Arjuna, whether (in) pleasant or painful (situations) he is considered a perfect yogi"

Yoga conceived in the Absolutist way knows no set-back and is the supreme perfection here raised above all others

The need for the establishment of a bi polar relation with the Absolute is here treated in advance as belonging to yoga. This statement (verse 47)

> "Of all yogis, he who with inner Self is merged in Me, full of faith, devoted to Me, is considered by Me the most unitive (*yuktah tamah*)"

puts the doctrine here in line with the doctrines stated at the end of chapter IX and repeated at the end of the Gita, XVIII, 65

> "Become one in mind with Me be devoted to Me; sacrifice to Me, bow down to Me, you shall come to Me alone, I promise you (in) truth, you are dear to Me"

Chapter VII In this chapter the counterparts extend from life here to values in the hereafter The hylozoic, cosmological, and transcendental value factors of the "here" and the "hereafter" are equated and harmonized by a notion of the Absolute which is ontological and teleological at once Positive wisdom is referred to in verse 2

> "I shall teach you this (pure) wisdom together with this (applied) knowledge, without any omission, knowing which, there will be nothing more here left over that should be known"

And the need for establishing bi polarity with Absolute wisdom is implied in the very opening verse of the chapter

> "Krishna said Having a mind attached to Me, O Partha (Arjuna), and joining unitively through yoga, and having Me as refuge, how you will know Me without any doubt, comprehensively, that do hear"

Chapter VIII Here the synthetic revaluation of all interior stands of spiritual life known at the time of the Gita is put on one side and the yogi himself as understood in the Gita and raised to the status of the Absolute through wisdom is the counterpart placed on the other side, and then both are brought unitively together

Chapters IX and X These together constitute the key chapters of the whole work The Absolute attains perfect

unity of value as the highest object of meditation by the con templative In chapter x the unitive values involved are actual presences or value factors belonging to the universe, into relationship with which we can enter These values range from reason to personal honour in the first instance, and continue into objectified values or presences These result from the same unitive Absolute The difference between the values of the two chapters is very subtle and negligible We can only generalize and say that those of the earlier chapter are more conceptual than perceptual

Chapter xi Here the Absolute is viewed as existing between the past and the future in the positive actuality of the present which itself is represented as in a state of flux or becoming Conventional theological notions are subjected to revaluation in terms of the Absolute The author takes advantage of the tragic aspect of the Absolute to refer to the actual waging of war by Arjuna, justifying it on the ground that in the general flux of becoming all but the pure Absolute suffers change

Chapter xii The contemplative has two alternative counter parts to choose from the Manifested Absolute and the Un manifested The Manifested is the value recommended in the name of facility in establishing the bi polarity which is the essence of the yoga of the Gita Those who are able to fulfil the condition of bi polarity even with an abstract notion of the Absolute are considered all the better in the last verse

> But they who cherish devotedly this righteous immortal value, as stated endowed with faith, with Me for Supreme, those devotees are exceedingly dear to Me

Chapter xiii In this chapter the counterparts are the Field and the Knower of the Field A delicate unity is established between these two philosophical aspects of reality

Chapter xiv Here the lower Self still within the sway of the three modalities of nature (*gunas*) is on one side and the higher Self which is its own counterpart is on the other side to be equated together unitively to yield a neutral state in the Absolute Self

Chapter xv Here the synthesis of the two aspects of the Person is more complete and helps in the formulation of the Absolute as a Paramount Person representing the most Sup reme of Values

Chapter XVI: Now the problem of evil in the world is faced squarely, though still in a contemplative manner. Men are divided into two distinct groups as good and bad. Evil does exist in this world as part of the foundation aspect of the Absolute referred to in the last verses of the previous chapter. To avoid evil, the *shāstras* (texts) are to be relied on, as stated in the last verse of the present chapter:

> "Therefore the scripture is your authority in deciding what should and should not be done. Understanding what is indicated for guidance in scripture, it is right you should work here."

Chapter XVII: This chapter deals with ready-made patterns of contemplative behaviour (as a form of action) open to men to choose from, and the contemplative is helped to guide himself wisely between forms of belief by a graded theory based on the modalities of nature (*gunas*) used diagnostically.

Chapter XVIII: The ready-made patterns of behaviour open to a contemplative to conform to or to select, are discussed here on the same basis of the three modalities of nature (*gunas*) used diagnostically. Arjuna can put on the armour of a warrior or don the mantle of a quieter contemplative pattern as he likes. Whether he fought and felt happy only by killing is left an open question. The decision on this point, however, is not important for those who do not have exactly the same temperament as Arjuna, and who are not placed exactly in the same circumstances. To the last, Arjuna is left a free man in the Gita. He can act as he likes, as we see from verse 63: "scrutinizing all, omitting nothing, do as you like." A true contemplative, free of war-mindedness, faced with a pattern of true and calm contemplative behaviour, is outlined in verses 50 to 53 inclusive:

> "How he who is ascended to Perfection thereby obtains the Absolute, that supreme consummation of wisdom, that do you learn from Me, O Son of Kuntī (Arjuna) in brief;
>
> "Endowed with pure Reason, restraining the Self with firmness, detaching oneself from sound and other sense-objects, and casting out liking and disliking;
>
> "Dwelling in solitude, frugal in diet, controlling speech, body and mind, ever in meditation and contemplation, resorting to dispassion;

"And relinquishing egoism, power, arrogance, desire, anger, possessiveness, free from ownership, and tranquil, he is worthy of becoming the Absolute"

Thus each chapter of the Gita has a central value and value counterparts referring to the life of contemplation Some are conceived dualistically, though still subjectively, others are conceived objectively When there are two value components, they should be treated as counterparts to be co-ordinated or accorded one with the other according to the requirements of an Absolutist outlook This Absolutist outlook could be conceived in the general terms of a philosophical theory or in the most specific particularized terms of a positive or a fully lived life

VERSES ILLUSTRATING DIALECTICS

When we examine the structure of individual verses, we find this same method of juxtaposing counterparts and equalizing them is strikingly employed We have already referred to the example in II, 16 which states the case of dialectics in as clear a manner as possible

"What is unreal cannot have being, and non being cannot be real the (unitive) conclusion in regard to both these has been known to philosophers"

Here we have two propositions stated together, one being the counterpart of the other This is not a type of reasoning which is strictly syllogistic There is no middle term and the principle of contradiction is not availed of, nor that of an *excluded middle If we try to place this form of argument in* the context of the *Tarka Shastra* (Textbook on Logical Reasoning Method) of Annam Bhatta of the Nyāya-Vaiseshika school, we find that instead of *abhava* (non being) postulated by them, we have here a vague middle term entity which is admitted and put forward by implication as possible None of the dualistic schools could be meant here by the reference to philosophers This way of reasoning has its background in the Upanishads and the Vedas themselves To cite but one instance, we have the famous reference to *vidya* (science) and *avidya* (nescience) which are taken up in the *Isha* Upanishad for dialectical treatment side by side with the parallel example

of the two concepts of *sambhūti* (becoming) and *vinasha* (extinction) There is reference to ancient philosophers even there who were capable of treating these two counterparts together as implied in the expression *ubhayam saha* (bearing both) used there The expression *ubhayam* (both) is the characteristic of this rare type of philosophical reasoning employed also in the Gita

Let us take another example, XVIII, 12, from the Gita, which shows the special character of this kind of argument

"Pleasant, unpleasant and mixed benefits accrue in the spiritual progress beyond of the non-relinquisher (*atyagi*) but none anywhere for the renouncers (*samnyasis*)"

Here the question involved is one of comparing the renouncer (*samnyāsi*) with the relinquisher (*tyagi*) But instead of more simply and directly accomplishing this task by taking a relinquisher and a renouncer, both of whom have points of similarity, this verse takes the non-relinquisher and compares him with a renouncer The *atyagi* has nothing in common with the *samnyāsi*, but there is a common ground to the imperfect, humanly conceivable *samnyāsi* and a *tyagi* who is quite advanced in spirituality So by opposing the full *samnyāsi* and the non-*tyāgi*, we arrive at a conclusion where the *samnyāsi* and the *tyagi* have a common ground wherein one is as good as the other. The method implied here may be said to be that of DIALECTICAL REVALUATION of both renunciation (*samnyasa*) and relinquishment (*tyāga*) in the light of the neutral Absolute The middle way common to both the *tyagi* and the *samnyāsi* is the path recommended by the Gita

In IV, 18 we have another striking example of the use of subtle dialectics in the Gita, (this type is representative of others, such as II, 69 and VI, 6) as an interesting sample

"One who is able to see inaction in action and action in inaction, he among men is intelligent, he is the one of unitive way (yogi) while still engaged in every (possible) kind of work"

The relation between action (*karma*) and inaction (*akarma*) cannot be here one of complete mutual exclusion without any middle ground between them There is here a possibility implied that action and inaction could exist neutrally in one

and the same person For examples we should have to turn to the paradoxes of Zeno, the pupil of Parmenides Very clever commentaries have been lavished by intelligent thinkers on the possible meaning of these contradictory requirements Some explain it dualistically, others insist on giving a strictly non-dualistic meaning

The neutral Absolute is attainable only to a certain rare type of reasoning sometimes called intuition and at other times direct awareness Śankara refers to this faculty by the term *uha poha,* a double way of thinking where there is a forward and a backward movement employed in arriving at certitude When the methods of comparison and contrast are employed together in a certain organic way, that would correspond to what this way of reasoning represents Apparent paradoxes give up their intrinsic verity and are solved by the same intuitive method The term nearest to this type of reasoning is "dialectics" which we have already explained More examples of this subtle use of dialectics abound throughout the Gita, and will be found dealt with in the body of the commentary

PECULIAR EXPRESSIONS

Enigmatic Paired Compounds If we focus our attention more minutely on the constituent elements of structure making up certain expressions peculiar to the Gita, we discover the same dialectics employed by the author Many of the enigmas of the Gita become understandable As a supreme example of this we could take the expression in the second Sanskrit line of xv, 15

> "And I am seated in the heart of all, from Me are memory and (positive) wisdom and its negative process, I am that which is to be known from all the Vedas, I am indeed the Vedānta Maker and the Veda Knower too"

Reference is made here to the Absolute unitively conceived, both as the Vedanta Maker (*vedanta krit*) and the Veda-Knower (*vedavit*) It is well known that Vedanta teaches wisdom and involves no action and, on the other hand, it is also well known that the Vedas are full of injunctions and mandates of an obligatory nature referring to various actions of ritual or of religious observance in general

But we find here in the combined expression made up of the two expressions above, that the term which should normally apply to Veda is applied to Vedānta, and *vice versa.*

The explanation can only be in the light of dialectics. In the revalued Vedānta of the Gita we find there are practical aspects referred to as *abhyāsa*, (practice), e.g.:

> "By practice . . . and by dispassion (the mind) is held (together)". vi, 35.
> "Meditating with the mind engaged in the yoga involving positive effort . . . he goes to the Supreme Person. . ." viii, 8.
> "If you are unable to fix your thoughts steadily on Me, then by means of unitive ascent (yoga of practice) seek to reach Me. . ." xii, 9.

Again, the expression *veda-vit* is a similar enigma. Veda is what gives importance to obligatory injunction (*vidhi*) and tabu (*nisheda*) which refer to actions. At the end of chapter xvii however, the Gita accepts in a revalued form the great dictum *Aum-Tat-Sat* (Absolute-Word That which is Real) as in xvii, 23 where the Vedas are directly referred to.

> "Aum-Tat-Sat—this has been known in the past as designating the Absolute. The scriptures (called) Brāhmanas, the Vedas and Sacrifices also by this were prescribed of old."

The Vedas are dialectically revalued so as not to enter into conflict with free contingent wisdom. It is this *revalued* Vedic spirituality which is referred to as *the Veda to be known*—not practised—in the expression *Veda-Vit* as used here. Both the expressions—*Vedānta-krit* and *Veda-vit*—together refer to the unitively revalued notion of the Absolute of the Gita teaching.

Double-Edged Recommendations: In certain chapters of the Gita we find double recommendations such as "remember Me; fight also" (viii, 7) and "repeating the one syllable Aum and remembering Me" (viii, 13). In such cases the instructions or recommendations must be thought of as referring to two aspects of the personality. The ambivalent concept of the Self is implied in many parts of the Gita as in iii, 39, where the enemy of wisdom in the form of desire is likened to an eternally insatiable fire Ambivalent tendencies are also implied in xiv, 18

"Those who abide in the pure clear modality (*sathvik*) go upwards, the affective active (*rajasik*) dwell in the middle, and the inert-dark (*tamasik*) abiding in the functions of the lowest modality of nature, go downwards"

and in the discussion of the two Persons of xv, 16

"There are two Persons in the world, the Changing and the Changeless, the Changing comprises all beings, and the Mysteriously fixed is called the Changeless"

There are many other references where the two aspects of the Self have to be postulated to yield any cogent meaning at all, as in vi, 5 and 6

"By the Self the Self must be upheld, the Self should not be let down, the Self indeed is (its own) dear relative, the Self indeed is the enemy of the Self

"The Self is dear to one (possessed) of Self, by whom even the Self by the Self has been won, for one not (possessed) of Self, the Self would be in conflict with the very Self, as if an enemy"

The dualism of the Gita is very marked in the early chapters In the last chapters again the dualism tends to be accentuated The thorough going Samkhya reasoning of chapter ii, which even denies the extinction of the army when killed, refers at the same time to the shame of dishonour for Arjuna Here contingency and necessity come together However they come closer together in later chapters and then in the middle chapters, the two are blended The duality is later accentuated in the further chapters and, in the last chapter action gains an objective status as a pattern of behaviour which is to be fitted like a cap on the person of the spiritual aspirant

In the particular instance above, where Arjuna is asked to remember Krishna and also fight the remembering gains the foreground and fighting recedes to the background In the last chapter, however, the behaviour pattern into which fighting fits gains the foreground and contemplation is taken for granted as implied in the person of the contemplative The actual and the perceptual are separated by less and less degrees of implicit duality as the chapters approach the centre

of the work, while they tend to widen out again towards the second and later half of the work, coming round once more to the position of the starting chapters To extract the full meaning of the double expressions and recommendations given throughout the Gita, this peculiarity of the construction has to be kept in mind

MINUTER HINTS OF UNITIVE TREATMENT

Spread over the whole range of the Gita we find smaller expressions such as *cha* (also), *api cha* (and also), and *eva cha* (even also) These are the most used of all the expressions in the Gita In the light of the statement in the Gita itself that the Absolute is the grammatical dual compound called *dvandva* (mentioned in x, 33), it is easy to see the importance of this *dvandva* usage for the dialectical method of the Gita, so that thereby two propositions can be spoken of *together* instead of alternatively This is the essence of dialectics—to deal with two propositions together

It can make all the difference in the world to the meaning of a sentence if the significance of such little words like *cha* (also) are treated lightly as if interchangeable with expressions like *va* (even, or) Indeed there is a glaring instance of such an unpardonable error committed by most translators and commentators in interpreting the very first verse of Krishna s teaching, where he attempts to correct the confusion of Arjuna Indifference to the implications and requirements of dialectical reasoning has vitiated most commentaries of the Gita In this particular instance in II 11, it makes a world of difference to translate the sentence to mean (as is usually done), "The wise grieve *neither* for the living *nor* for the dead , instead of fully respecting the delicate implications of dialectics and translating as the veritable philosophers (*panditah*) are not affected in respect of those whose breath has gone and those whose breath has not gone '

In the former usual translation there is room for thinking that the wise are callously unrealistic and incapable of sympathy in the face of disaster such as death This is far different from what is actually stated in the Gita where the question of sorrow does not arise at all with a wise man, irrespective of whether one is still living as equally in the case of one who has passed further onwards in the stream of life There is no choice between opposite alternatives suggested by the

expression *cha* (and, also) Although such differences may seem trivial, they help us to see that the delicate flavour of the unitive import of the revaluation of wisdom in the Gita is often missed in many loose translations This happens more especially when the translator is unaware of the delicacies involved in the correct use of dialectics

A DIALECTICAL REVALUATION OF CONTEMPLATION

Wrong or imperfect beliefs in the domain of spiritual life have prevailed because of ignorance in regard to the fully Absolutist way of wisdom In this matter, the Gita undertakes a thoroughgoing dialectical revaluation of contemplative spirituality under the name of yoga

The anterior wrong opinions which are subjected in the Gita to such a process of revaluation so as to yield the teaching of the Gita in its finalized form may be discussed *conveniently under the following categories (1)* The Path of the Ancestors (*pitriyana*) and the Path of the Shining Gods (*devayana*) (2) the Rational and Pragmatic Approach (*Samkhya*) and the Approach of Self Discipline (*Yoga*), (3) Sacrifices, Austerities and Offerings and (4) Renunciation (*samnyasa*) There are many secondary matters also coming under revaluation which we shall discuss in the commentary itself

(1) *Pitriyana and Devayana* Pitriyana is the path of the ancestors This is a widely prevailing form of religious or spiritual life not only of India but of the whole world Before the Aryans who brought the Vedic sacrifices with them which referred to the shining gods (*devas*) such as Indra and Varuna the vast matrix of Indians had ancestral forms of worship Arjuna himself is somewhat representative of this ancestral formation, although he may have been familiar with Vedic worship too through his preceptor Drona Both pitriyana and devayana are revalued in the Gita in various chapters The *characteristic silence of Krishna that we have noticed to the* philosophical and religious scruples of Arjuna in the first chapter, shows that both the ancestral way and the way of the gods are meant to be replaced by the thoroughgoing Absolutist way This revalued way includes both of the old ways as a flooded area can hide an old well—to use an analogy employed in the Gita itself in II 46

"There would be as much use for all the Vedas to a brahman of wisdom as there could be for a pool of water when a full flood prevails over all"

This is the first case of revaluation which the Gita student has to keep in mind

(2) *Samkhya Yoga* The revaluation of Samkhya and Yoga is mentioned with telling emphasis in v, 4 and 5

"That rationalism (*samkhya*) and unitive self discipline (*yoga*) are distinct, only children say, not the well informed (*panditah*), one well established in any one of them obtains the result of both

'That status attained by men of rationalist persuasion (*samkhya*) is reached also by those of unitive Self discipline (*yoga*), rationalism (*samkhya*) and Self discipline (*yoga*) as one, he who sees thus he (alone) sees '

This revaluation however, has other implications The rejection of ritualistic Vedism has already been accomplished in II, 44

'In the case of those whose minds are under the sway of such teachings, who are attached to enjoyment and domination, a well founded reason does not come under the sway of the peace of contemplation (*samadhi*) "

The cutting ruthlessly of the mystical tree of chapter xv also involves the rejection of relativist Vedism in favour of an Absolutism which still includes whatever is most precious in the Vedic pattern of spirituality Reason and ritual are not estranged in the Gita teaching but are brought unitively together under the aegis of the Absolute, as implied in IV, 24

(For him) the Absolute (*Brahman*) is the act of offering, the Absolute is the substance offered into the Absolute which is the fire offered by (him) the Absolute, the end to be reached by him being even the Absolute by means of his peace supreme of Absolutist action

(3) *Sacrifice Austerity and Offering* Contemplative life which expresses itself through these three channels has also been subjected to revaluation in the Gita and this is unequivocally stated in VIII, 28

"Whatever meritorious result is found implied in the Vedas, in sacrifices, austerities and offerings (gifts), the contemplative who is unitively established, having understood this (teaching here) transcends all these and attains to the supreme primal State"

while the task has been more completely accomplished in chapter XVII, e g verses 27 and 28

"Steady loyalty in sacrifice, austerity and giving (offerings) is also called SAT (good and existing) and so also action so intended is called SAT

"Whatever is sacrificed, given or done, and whatever austerity is gone through, without faith it is called ASAT (non existent, no good), O Partha (Arjuna), it has no value here or hereafter'

(4) *Samnyasa* The dialectical revaluation of *samnyasa* or renunciation is perhaps one of the most important original contributions of the Gita From the point where Arjuna refers to taking to a life of begging, up to the last chapter where the whole question is subjected to a very close dialectical scrutiny and revaluation, the Gita has many references giving a truer picture of what the perfected *samnyasi* (renunciator) ought to represent The perfected renunciator who can really abstain from activity is portrayed in XVIII, 49

"He whose reason is unattached in situations, whose Self has been won over, from whom desire has gone, by renunciation (*samnyasa*) he reaches the supreme perfection of transcending action

Such a task of dialectical revaluation, however, involves a progression in the arguments proceeding from stage to stage The eighteen chapters of the Gita thus form different steps, cross sections, or distinct frames of reference and between each of them there will be differences of the angle of vision which many may tend to treat as contradictory statements Viewed in the light of a sweeping generously conceived and comprehensive dialectical revaluation of the whole range of spirituality, and taking representative sections for convenience only, the apparent contradictions which might appear glaring at first

sight, become still perfectly compatible with the general teaching of the Gita

SOCALLED CONTRADICTIONS AND INCONSISTENCIES

The most glaring instance of contradiction is in the fact that the Gita admits non hurting (*ahimsa*) as the most important of overt expressions of spirituality in x, 5 Yet apparently, in the very next chapter, xi, 34, there is a direct incitement to kill by the very same Krishna We have pointed out the reason in the fact that they belong to different grades of truth as they are to be distinguished in the literary devices employed by Vyasa There is also the further reason we have mentioned, namely, that each chapter brings together positive and negative aspects of the Absolute in a certain reciprocal and symmetrically conceived manner After the centre of the Gita has been passed, the subject of chapter xi becomes markedly, objectively, or positively conceived In the vision of Arjuna, Vyasa gets the chance of relating the actualities of the battlefield with the tragic vision of the positive notion of the Absolute of this particular chapter Treated as belonging to their proper contexts, these statements for and against nonhurting are still understandable to the student who is not carried away by mere superficialities When we note that Vyasa takes care to indicate that this reference to actuality verges on actuality as such belonging to curtain device No 1 by purposely going out of the way in this chapter in introducing Sanjaya and presenting the reference to killing strictly only as within the brackets as it were, of this device, between the verses 9 and 35, the contradiction is only apparent Although a paradox is still implied, such a paradox is only consistent with the paradoxical style necessarily implied in the dialectics of the Gita

The status of these verses is not, therefore, the same as the status of x, 5 Even making due allowance thus for what is called *prakarana bheda* (difference of context or subject-matter) there remains left over as legitimate, the much talked-of question whether Arjuna is being asked to kill as a social obligation We have explained this matter incidentally in other parts of this introduction The advice has only a permissive and not a mandatory value as it is to be understood here The general urge of life seeking expression could,

by very rare coincidence of circumstances as detailed in the *Mahabharata*, all pointing towards the absolute inevitability and imperative necessity of a certain line of conduct open to Arjuna, justify this advice to kill, on the part of Krishna It has no more obligatory character than when a midwife tells a mother in the pangs of childbirth not to repress or obstruct the natural urge at the critical moment If on the basis of such an advice it should be thought that it is the social duty of all women in all circumstances to give birth to children, that would be no greater absurdity than to say, as has often been said, that being a *kshatriya* (of a fighting class), it is the duty of Arjuna to kill A warrior without an absolutely justified war such as the one which presented itself to Arjuna, would not be different from the caricature of a warrior such as Don Quixote

We have discussed this crowning contradiction of the Gita in some detail so as to avoid mentioning others of lesser importance with which the Gita text will be seen to abound We shall face some of them in the actual commentary As far as we are able to see, however, there are no contradictions in the Gita which cannot be explained

CHARGES OF ECLECTICISM, SYNCRETISM AND SOLIPSISM

Even those who hold the Gita in great respect have directly or indirectly contributed to degrading this noble masterpiece of contemplative science, having such rare unity of structure and revealing such attention to detail, and correctness of critical expression, by looking upon it as a work which gives whatever answer is sought from it by anybody

The Gita is not a book of good luck, nor an encyclopedia, not is it one whose philosophy is lacking in organic unity *It is true that a vast range of subjects* has been touched upon by the author Merging the Self in the Absolute Self finds mention side by side with dietetic questions, or gazing at the tip of the nose or offering a fruit or a flower to God In the light of the structure of the Gita as we have explained above, and in the peculiarities of the treatment as a dialectical revaluation of anterior spiritual notions it will be readily conceded that the charges of being eclectic syncretic and even solipsist, would not apply to the work

The perfection of the structure of the Gita when examined in detail, would also refute the possibility of interpolations in the text, by which, according to many scholars, it is marred The truth is that the Gita has not been subjected to serious study in the same sense that, say, Shakespeare has been studied. This has been its misfortune As a result, political and religious adventurers have taken advantage of the Gita to support their own favourite doctrines

RHAPSODIC INTERLUDES

The *Bhagavad Gita* is above all meant to be a song, within the meaning as referred to in XIII, 4

> "Sung by seers (*rishis*) in many ways, severally and distinctly, in (different) metres, and also in the aphoristic words of the Brahma Sūtras replete with critical reasonings and positively determined"

After the Vedas and the Brahma Sutras there have been no other spiritual works which have attained to the sublimity and purity of the Gita, and which makes it fit to be considered on a common basis with the Vedas themselves Although orthodox scholars have shown and still show some hesitation in giving the Gita its long overdue place among the highest of the spiritual treasures of India, being even superior to the Vedas inasmuch as the Gita is absolutely open, dynamic and universal in its appeal, its true place is undoubtedly among the noblest and best contemplative masterpieces of literature in the world

Even when we try to appraise its value within the limited domain of Indian scripture, the interludes interspersed here and there in the Gita in a metre and verse form more ample and elaborate than the rest, have a tone of exaltation and ecstasy which gives to the Gita that pure and time honoured touch which reflects credit to the highest of hopes of which the human spirit is capable Such interludes attain to the heights of a spiritual rhapsody which is rare in any literature In some of these rhapsodic interludes there can be discerned a delicate play of gentle sarcasm almost imperceptibly hidden between the lines, as for example, in IX, 20 and 21

> "Knowers of the three (Vedas), soma drinkers, purified from sin, worshipping by sacrifices, pray to Me the way to

heaven, they, attaining the holy world of Indra (Lord of Gods), enjoy divine feasts in heaven

"They, having enjoyed that expansive heaven world, then on their merit exhausted, *they enter the world of* mortality, thus conforming to the righteous notions implied in the three (Vedas), desiring desirable objects they obtain values which come and go."

The dialectical revaluation of the Gita is accomplished without any abrupt breaking away from the old In this fulfilling, free and easy style as an exalted "hymn of dialectics" the Gita excels above all

CONCLUSION

In the light of the foregoing, we could sum up our position as follows

The Gita is a wisdom dialogue of a non-religious and non-obligatory, contemplative and philosophical order, consciously and artfully inserted in the heart of the great epic called the *Mahabharata* by the ancient Sage-Bard Vyasa, in which the rarest of possible coincidences called an absolutely just war is taken as presenting itself to be fought by its central character, Arjuna, who, being a sensitive and contemplatively disposed type of soldier, is about to adopt a negative, escapist attitude *of regret and retrospection when it was actually too late* for him to extricate himself from the situation that had already assumed a harsh and imperatively necessary character Arjuna suffered from a characteristic form of subtle egoism which, taking the form of self pity, regret or mystical agony, blurred his outlook making him claim prematurely the high virtue of renunciation while still given to relativist patterns of thinking altogether incompatible with the thoroughly absolutist philosophy and way of life that the Gita brings out through the *words of Krishna as representing* the Guru and Absolute at once

Krishna, who, besides being the Guru is also relation, friend and charioteer of Arjuna, takes every possible measure at every level of life possible, to remove the philosophical doubts, religious scruples and psycho-physical inhibitions which dimmed Arjuna's vision and clogged his spirit Eloquently and in elevating language, Krishna preaches that rare type of unitive wisdom or Absolutist way of life known as

Yoga, a mystical and intuitive path of contemplative dialectics. Established in this unitive way by which inner and outer factors of life are equalized, harmonized or neutralized, Arjuna is able to get rid of superstitious repressions and conflicts. He regains normality of outlook as a true yogi who did not particularly wish to avoid war when it was absolutely necessary, just and conducive to general happiness. Whether he adopted the way of quiet contemplative retirement portrayed in the last chapter, or whether he engaged in harsh warfare is left an open question by Vyāsa. Before the epic moves onward in its grand heroic pace again, we find Arjuna a fully disillusioned contemplative ready to affiliate himself wholeheartedly as one of the counterparts of a contemplative situation in which Krishna himself is involved as representing the supremely Absolute Value.

CHAPTER I

THE DIALECTICAL CONFLICT OF ARJUNA

Arjuna Vishada Yoga

SCANT respect has been paid by commentators like Śankara and others to this chapter Translators and others interested in the Gita teaching have tended to consider this chapter even as superfluous As a matter of fact this chapter deserves to be treated at least on a par with the rest of the chapters dealing with the Science of the Absolute

Before anything subtle or profound can be taught, the purvapaksha or the anterior position of the sceptic in regard to such a teaching has to be determined with clarity Vyāsa accomplishes this task with great attention to detail in this chapter This chapter may be said to contain the key to the proper understanding of the teaching in the rest of the book

Arjuna is not a mere coward on the battlefield His confusion is of a representative character As described in its three stages of verse 21, verses 29 and 30, and verse 47 in this chapter, and read together with its last stage in chapter II, 9, no room is left to doubt its fully contemplative character Such a term alone would justify the term yoga (unitive way) as applied to this chapter

When Arjuna tells Krishna again at the very end of the Gita (XVIII, 73) that he is willing to act on Krishna's advice and when he is described in the very last verse of the Gita as holding his bow and arrow normally again, the secret indications belonging to this chapter, serving to demarcate the various stages of the discussion of yoga (as it is meant to be understood in the Gita) may be said to have reached their natural culmination

Arjuna's confusion starts with his words " O Achyuta, stop my chariot right in the middle between the two armies ", (I, 21) We know how impossible it is to enter the no man's-land between two armies as the arrows fly (as stated in I, 20) The Gita itself by admitting such a possibility, gains, from this point onwards, a revised status as being primarily concerned

with contemplation rather than with the actual events of the battlefield. Arjuna's condition worsens in I, 29-30 when he sees friends not only on his side but on the side that faces him. He is a thoroughly confused man there, unable even to hold up his bow Gāndiva. He recovers some sort of firmness or certitude of outlook by the end of the chapter, when he sits down, throwing away his bow and arrow. By II, 9 he has finished philosophizing on the situation as ably perhaps as Krishna himself is able to do. The latter is only able, for the time being, to smile at Arjuna and mock him in the name of honour, etc. To be stated in its completeness, Krishna's answer needs all the remaining chapters. Even then, it is not easy to say clearly where Arjuna was wrong in his reasons, so elaborately stated in this chapter and more philosophically in the next. He prefers renunciation to fighting and does not care for the benefits that fighting might bring him. Detachment, relinquishment or renunciation are ways of life praised and even directly and indirectly recommended in the last chapter of the Gita.

Such being the case, to say in what exactly Arjuna's inconsistency (as referred to by Krishna when he says, "You speak words of wisdom too"—II, 11) lies, is not so easy a matter to locate or fix, as some persons imagine it to be. Arjuna is more than a mere fighter. He has the makings of a philosopher or even a dialectician as the words attributed to him in II, 5-8 amply reveal. These verses are in the special metre of the sacred scriptures which is a further indication to the reader that they have to be taken seriously as part of the contribution to contemplative thought, as intended by the author.

Further, Arjuna can be considered as a representative sceptic of his age, when India was filled with warring tribes, clans or even "castes", as understood in those days, in a sense somewhat different from the present. A close examination of Arjuna's objections to war in general reveals that they belong more to the world of ancestors than to the world of the Devas or Shining Gods of the Vedic context. His brother Bhima is a typical representative of the prehistoric stalwart, one rough and uncouth and having a great appetite. This natural man is innocent of the refinements of the Vedic ritualistic way of life which may be imagined to have been introduced into India by that time. Vedism represented the other, the Devayāna (way of the Shining Gods). The prehistoric Vrishnis and other clans of India were possibly the last remnants

of the ancestor-worshipping Pitriyanis (those following the way of the Fathers), of pre-Aryan or prehistoric India, possibly of the stratum of the Mohenjo-Daro Indus Valley civilization Although these matters are still highly speculative, all we want to stress here for the understanding of the Gita properly is that at least two distinct sets of values were involved in the revaluation of spirituality in India that took place at the time of the Mahābhārata war Bhishma, the respected patriarch of the Mahabhārata war and Drona, the teacher of archery and possibly of the Vedas too, may be said to represent the two types in question This is not an original suggestion, but one that has received sufficient recognition in India itself as we see from the composition called the *Gita Dhyana* to which we have referred in the general intoduction

Also in our introduction we have made reference to the literary devices employed by Vyāsa in order to fit the actualities of the war as described in the epic of the *Mahabharata* into the purer requirements of a contemplative work

Three curtains were mentioned before the stage becomes properly set for the contemplative dialogue (*samvada*) to begin The scene in which Samjaya reports to Dhritarāshtra is the first drop curtain with which this chapter begins This is raised once preliminarily between the first and second half of verse 21, to be dropped soon at the end of verse 23 and to be raised more properly in verse 28 The second curtain is seen with Krishna as a mere charioteer to Arjuna before being recognized as a Guru by Arjuna, which event takes place only after the proper request of Arjuna for instruction in II, 7 and actually only with II, 11 There we can see the third curtain or device of Vyāsa, where Krishna plays the role of the Guru and Arjuna listens to Krishna and sometimes questions him as a disciple Again, within the dialogue itself we have to separate the *purva-paksha* (anterior opinion) from the *siddhanta* (final doctrine) of the Guru Thus three different literary devices have to be kept in mind and also the separation of the disciple's mistaken prior notions from the finalized teaching of the Guru, before the reader can arrive at the proper teaching or message of the Gita Over and above all these, each of the eighteen chapters must be treated as a separate discussion with its own central idea of unity, its own frame of reference and exact terminology The unity of this particular chapter devolves round the need for stating clearly the position of the anterior sceptic for the teaching of the Gita

Dhritarashtra uvacha

[1] *dharmakshetre kurukshetre*
samaveta yuyutsavah
mamakah pandavash chaiva
kim akurvata samjaya

Dhritarashtra said
In the righteousness field the field of Kurus gathered together intent on battle, what did my people and also the sons of Pandu do O Samjaya?

Note that the literary device of employing Dhritarashtra speaking to Samjaya belongs to the front curtain He is the holder of the kingdom who is to decide whether he is to maintain the *status quo* or let things happen or shape themselves according to truth or justice In this case he is a conservative who sticks obstinately to fixed custom He refuses to allow any revaluation or readjustment to take place To that extent he is a blind statesman His party led by Duryodhana (see verse 2) are also to be considered diehards who will not let the old order change to give place to the new The latter is therefore aptly compared to a whirlpool in the *Gita Dhyana* (see Appendix)

Krishna s way of thinking or his spirituality has its greatest obstruction in Duryodhana just as Rama in the *Ramayana* has his in Ravana Duryodhana goes to heaven in the end but heaven is not the ideal of the absolutist spirituality of Krishna Going to heaven is not a credit as far as the Gita is concerned The Gita stands for pure Absolutism—i e for no benefits or fruits of action whether here or hereafter, thus conforming to the requirements tacitly understood within the discipline of the Vedanta (as for example found in Śankara s *Vivekachudamani* v 19 non attachment to benefits of this world or the world to come)

This should be noted together with fact that Duryodhana the chief of the army of Dhritarashtra approached Drona who is a Guru of an indifferent sort a priest for both the Pandavas and the Kauravas and not only a teacher of archery but an inculcator of relativist notions including Vedic ritualism Arjuna himself has evidently been influenced by the teaching either of Drona or at least of Bhishma the other Guru here, as can be seen from his arguments in this chapter where in verse 42 he speaks of *naraka* (hell) Arjuna thus speaks of

relativist forms of spirituality, though not equally consciously of Vedic heavenly values

The reader has to be clear in his own mind about the nature of the contending parties, so that both historically, and in the context of righteousness, he can determine which side here deserves his support—otherwise even as a *purana* or legend the Gita loses its point, and it will fail to make him any wiser than he was before he read it Hence these indications, though seemingly elaborate, become necessary

Dharmakshetre kurukshetre righteousness field of Kurus Why these apparently redundant epithets? This is characteristic of the style of the Gita throughout Being part of a *purana*, an epic legend or saga, it has to be correct in historical details and at the same time it has to fulfil the need for guiding people in the appreciation of ethical and spiritual values

Kurukshetra is the historical field of battle of the Kauravas, and is also to be understood simultaneously as a place where the revaluation of ethical and spiritual values is going to take place

The word *dharma* in *dharmakshetra* comes from the word " to bear ' or " to support Each man, besides being a man pure and simple, comes with his own notions of natural conduct, by which he chooses between right and wrong courses of action This second moral person is superimposed on the basic animal man Or, in other words, the man is the wielder of his notion of right action when such notions of right action are revalued That is the *dharmakshetra* referred to here We have to be prepared for other double epithets or instructions throughout the Gita textbook It is one of the peculiarities of the style of the work, referred to in the introduction (page 59). We have for example " think of Me, also fight ' (VIII, 7) and ' thinking of Me and repeating (Aum) ' (VIII, 13)

Mamakah my people This underlines the relative mindedness of king Dhritarashtra himself who could have been impartial or neutral as the custodian of all the people, and his taking of sides here is the beginning of the trouble It divides the people in two, producing a duality which is responsible for the battle itself

Samjaya uvacha

[2] *drishtva tu pandavanikam*
vyudham duryodhanas tada
acharyam upasamgamya
raja vachanam abravit

Samjaya said:
On seeing the army of the Pāndavas in (battle) array,
Prince Duryodhana, having approached his teacher,
then gave utterance to the following speech:

The fact that Duryodhana's name itself signifies "difficult to fight," indicates the conservative diehard. He is therefore the active agent of Dhritarāshtra who is himself not very active, or debarred by blindness from activity. Dhritarāshtra is also blind to truth, and in his talk to Samjaya is theoretically interested in what is happening. The first degree of activity is therefore attained in Duryodhana who is in charge of operations. We see how the epic qualities thus begin to be unravelled in the Gita.

Āchāryam upasamgamya: having approached his teacher. There are three who enjoy the rank of spiritual teachers or *āchāryas* on the side of the Kauravas, namely Drona, Bhīshma, and Kripa. The last is related to Drona himself as brother-in-law, and both probably belong to the Vedic context. On the other hand, Bhīma is a *brahmachāri* or strict bachelor who is a patriarch (*pitāmaha*) rather than a priest. His virtues are many, including continence, wisdom, bravery, fidelity to his word, etc. He is a model of spirituality equally important beside Drona and given equal status in the *Gita Dhyāna* where these two are considered as constituting the two banks of the battle-river (*rananadi*), which is the river of dialectical revaluation of spirituality in terms of the absolutism of Krishna-paramātma, who is there mentioned as the ferry-man (*kaivartaka*) who is capable of ferrying the devotees across the stream of rapids and whirlpools, rocks, crocodiles and billows—representing the various impediments in the relativist world (*samsāra*). The absolutist standpoint represents the boat wherein the Guru is the Ferryman.

On the Pāndava's side therefore, there is one Guru and one only, who teaches *Brahmavidyā*, the Science of the Absolute, as against many partial gurus and numerous followers of different kinds on the side of the Kauravas, all of whom could be classified under two major heads—those who stand for Vedic *Devayāna* values, and those who stand for ancestral *Pitriyāna* values, which may be supposed to have been known in India before the advent of the Aryans; Bhishma representing the latter and Drona being typical of the former.

[3] *pasyai 'tām pāṇḍuputrāṇām*
acharya mahatim chamum
vyudhām drupadaputrena
tava sishyena dhimatā

O Teacher, look at this grand army of the sons of Pandu, marshalled by your talented pupil, the son of Drupada

The son of Drupada is Dhrishtadyumna He is considered as the arch-enemy of the Kauravas, which is fairly clear from the fact that he was killed at the hands of Ashvatthaman the son of Drona—although Drona was his teacher Note how pointed reference is made to Dhrishtadyumna, son of Drupada as a disciple of Drona, although all the Pandavas have been tutored in archery by Drona, including more important disciples like Arjuna and Dharmaputra who are omitted The reason for omission is probably that the latter represent righteousness in keeping with the absolutist teaching of Krishna, and so they are less capable *of actual rancour which is a desirable quality on the* battlefield

Dhimata—talented Should be construed more as sagacious organizing intelligence rather than as wisdom in the philosophical sense

[4] *atra sura maheshvāsa*
bhimarjunasama yudhi
yuyudhano viratas cha
drupadas cha mahārathah

Here are heroes, mighty archers, equal in battle to Bhima and Arjuna, Yuyodhana, Virata and Drupada of the great chariot

[5] *dhrishtaketus chekitanah*
kasirajas cha viryavan
purujit kuntibhojas cha
saibyas cha narapumgavah

Dhrishtaketu, Chekitana and the valiant King of Kasi, Purujit and Kuntibhoja, and that bull among men, Saibya

[6] *yudhamanyus cha virkranta*
uttamaujas cha viryavān
saubhadro draupadeyas cha
sarva eva maharathah

The heroic Yudhamanyu and the brave Uttamaujas, the son of Subhadra and the sons of Draupadi, all of great chariots

Bhima Yudhisthira's Commander in Chief, elder brother of Arjuna

Arjuna Pandava hero, central figure in the Gita and representative sceptic or *purva pakshin*

Yuyudhana (also called Satyaki) Krishna's charioteer when the latter is playing the usual part of historical warrior in the epic

Virata a prince who sheltered the Pandavas

Drupada father of Draupadi, wife of the Pandavas

Dhrishtaketu King of the Chedis

Chekitana warrior in the Pandava army

Kasi-Raja King of Benares

Purujit A king and brother of Kuntibhoja

Kuntibhoja brother of Purujit.

Saibya King of the Shibis

Yudhamanyu a warrior

Uttamaujas One of great valour

Saubhadrah son of Arjuna and his wife Subhadra

Draupadeya of the line of Drupada

Besides names of important persons, epithets will occur throughout the Gita, such as 'lion of men" etc They are necessary to give the text the heroic setting and flavour belonging to a saga They should not be mixed up with the clear spiritual message of the Gita The clear teaching must be filtered out free from all such incidental dross belonging to the epic An epithet like *maharatha* (one having a great chariot) denotes some military rank, like that of a field-marshal

[7] *asmakam tu visishta ye*
tan nibodha dvijottama
nayaka mama sainyasya
samjnartham tan bravimi te

> But know who are the most distinguished among us, O best of the twice born, the leaders of my army, these I tell you, for you to recognize by name

After enumerating some of the leaders of the opposite army in which, it should be noted, there are glaring omissions, especially of Yudhisthira (eldest of the Pandavas, probably because of his reputation for virtue)—Duryodhana who is here speaking to Drona, now turns his attention to his own army and indicates the purpose of such an enumeration This enumeration, according to him, is not without importance Like Dhritarāshtra in verse 1, he is still speaking from the relativist standpoint He insists on talking of "our side" (*asmakam*) The evils of war as they might affect humanity as a whole are carefully excluded, till Arjuna's confusion (*vishāda*) opens the question from a non-relativist point of view

The word *asmakam*, meaning among us, our side, is therefore underlined by the author Vyasa as the first word in this verse That Vyāsa intends explicitly to refer to the two contending parties, is sufficiently evident from the word *samjnartham* (recognition by name) put in the mouth of Duryodhana here The list of names is not meant to be merely a catalogue of warriors to be treated indifferently The names are meant to be understood as belonging either to the blast or counter-blast aspects of the situation, which is to be examined as it unravels itself, both as a battle of events and as a progressive revaluation of *dharma* (right conduct) or spiritual values in the chapters that follow

Samjna really means more than name or class It has an element of further recognition as coming under a distinct category What Vyāsa wants to accomplish here is quite evident He wants the reader of the Gita to avoid confusing the actual with the spiritual values implied The literary device in the mind of the author thus comes into evidence quite deliberately in the end of the last line This is most vital for the reader to see

[8] *bha an bhishmas cha karnas cha*
kripas cha samitimjayah
asvatthāma vikarnas cha
saumadattis tathai 'va cha

You and Bhishma, and Karna, and also Kripa, the victor in war, Ashvatthaman and Vikarna and also the son of Somadatta,

bhavan, thyself, i e Drona, a teacher of the Vedic context who also taught archery

Bhishma a patriarch reputed for his celibacy and high purity of life, much respected by all

Karna Born of the Sun god and Kuntī, mother of the Pāndavas when she was still young He was a great fighter and archer, invincible because of an armour given by the Sun-god himself

Kripa brother of Kripī, the wife of Drona, but sympathetic to the Pāndavas

Ashvatthaman son of Drona by Kripi, subject of a false alarm raised about him in order to distract Drona and demoralize him by saying that Ashvatthāman was dead, when it was only a toy elephant of that name which was destroyed.

Vikarna a ruthless fighter like Ashvatthāman

Saumadatti son of Somadatta, King of the Bahikas

Note that Bhishma is named only *after* Drona who is very little connected by lineage with Bhishma or indeed with either of the contending parties Drona is only the teacher of archery, but he is given first place This must be because the battle issue involving spiritual values is of interest to Drona as a *dvijottama* (a twice born invested with the sacred thread). Again, in verse 25, Krishna himself as the charioteer makes pointed reference to Drona and Bhīshma as against all the rest of the army, not excluding even kings It is clear that the issue involves spiritual factors personified by these two characters, and that the interests of clashing kings are but incidental to the situation which is gradually being developed This development finally reaches a focal point with the beginning of the dialogue (*samvada*) proper (from ii, 10 onwards). The dialogue constitutes the core of the Gita In the *Gita Dhyana* the teaching is referred to as a " perfume " or *gandha* of the lotus flower, to be enjoyed by the good men of the world who seek spiritual values The historical episodes contained in the *Mahabhārata* are treated as extraneous or gross, being described as the petals and anthers of the lotus The perfume or the song of wisdom or song of dialectics is the supreme value for the good man That is the fragrance which comes as a rhapsody in this song or Gita

[9] *anye cha bahavah sura*
madarthe tyaktajivitah
nanasastra praharanah
sarve yuddhavisaradah

And many other heroes who are willing to die for me, who have various missiles and weapons, and all skilled in warfare

It should be understood that "willing to die for me" shows the defence of precious values dear to human beings Fanatics will die for their faith in a holy war Faith becomes at least as precious as life Duryodhana here represents a life-value connected with kingship and power in this world This is held precious by his followers But of course, however exalted such a value might be, it is still in the relativist plane. It might bring them heaven as recompense in the hereafter, as the warriors of Scandinavian mythology were carried triumphantly to Valhalla by powerful female deities called Valkyries Duryodhana himself is supposed to have won this reward This epithet "willing to die for me" is therefore to fix one generic character common to all the Kauravas All are affiliated to a central relativist value personified in their king, Duryodhana

Their other qualifications are those which are attributes of the workaday world (*vyavaharika*) They carry diverse weapons and are skilled in warfare Their capability to lay down their lives for the still relativist value of kingship is therefore the only spiritual factor to their credit

[10] *aparyaptam tad asmakam*
balam bhishmabhirakshitam
paryaptam tv idam etesham
balam bhimabhirakshitam

This army of ours which is under the care of Bhishma is insufficient but that army of theirs which is under the care of Bhima is adequate

Duryodhana himself has an inkling of the poverty of this type of spirituality here represented in the Kaurava side, when he feels diffident about the army led by Bhishma This is the first supreme example of the special style found so often

in the Gita In the first place there is a symmetry to be seen in the construction of the verse Bhima (the Strong) and Bhishma (the Terrible) are evidently brought in to be treated as counterparts of a situation in the world of actuality from which the subtler dialectics of the later theoretical arguments are to have their natural springboard

aparyaptam has been differently construed by Sridhara and Anandagiri, by Sridhara as meaning "insufficient" and by Anandagiri as "unlimited" Perhaps an equilibrium of qualitative and quantitative elements is purposely intended by the author here The usual or first meaning, "insufficient" or "unequal to the task" suits the sense here definitely, especially if we note that as a relativist, as Duryodhana is intended to be here, his diffidence is understandable in the same way as the *nimittani cha pashyami* (I see omens) of Arjuna is understandable (in verse 31) Diffidence or strange omens have to be set off one against the other in the revaluation of relativism in absolutist terms which is going to take place as the chapters proceed Both are forms of doubt—one here and now, and the other with an element of the hereafter added on Arjuna being a *purva pakshin* (anterior critic) of the contemplative context, his doubt is superior to that of Duryodhana, because it includes *iha* and *para*, the "here" and the "hereafter," while Duryodhana's doubt is confined to the "here" only

"That army of ours" and "this army of theirs" are again put in a delicate dialectical relationship "That—ours" and "this—theirs"—to the extent that reciprocity is suggested, to that extent Duryodhana is to be credited a good man. The interchange of 'that" for "this" again introduces the special style of the Gita upon which we lay emphasis because it is in keeping with the full subtle interplay of dialectical values for which this is only a preparation This is by no means a matter of grammatical quibbling Note that except for small suffixes or words like *a* and *tu* and *idam* there is no difference at all between the two limbs of this verse, and this perfect symmetry can be no accident and must have been consciously, intentionally brought in by the author for the reasons we have stated

[11] *ayaneshu cha sarveshu*
yathabhagam avasthitah
bhishmam eva 'bhirakshantu
bhavantah sarva eva hi

And let all of you standing in your respective posi tions at the entrance to every formation keep guard even on Bhishma

On the side of the Kauravas this verse makes it clear that the protection of the spirituality personified in Bhishma is their dearest collective value as far as they could understand That is why he is asked to be protected although all others (Drona for example) might deserve equal protection It should be further noticed that this verse shows many plurals employed, numerous ranks and files numerous divisions numerous generals The word *sarva* (all implying many) occurs twice This is evidently to emphasize the fact that unitive command is lacking as contrasted with the other army as we shall notice presently Quantitative and numerical factors prevail here Of course there is Bhishma as a central figure, but he is too old to take any initiative of a unitive pattern It is he who needs personal protection rather than himself leading others As contrasted with the vertical or orderly unitive organization of the Pandava army we find here among the Kauravas a horizontal amorphous or mass situation pre vailing The difference suggested here will become evident as we proceed

[12] *tasya samjanayan harsham*
kuruvriddhah pitamahah
simhanadam vinadyo chchaih
sankham dadhmau pratapavan

So as to cheer him the mighty old Kuru patriarch roared loudly like a lion and blew a conch

samjanayan harsham to generate joy (in him) What is the nature of the joy referred to here? The diffidence mentioned in verse 10 becomes here explicit Duryodhana s premonitions of defeat there are meant to be banished by the blowing of the conch shell by Bhishma who though very old under stands why Duryodhana is diffident He blows his conch as if to say I represent a spiritual value which is the highest as understood by all of us till now It contains elements of absolutism in the comparatively relativist field in which he *is a patriarch and ch ef among men* but still limited to the human context at its best His conch sound is of the nature

of a battle-cry Note by contrast that an epithet suggesting divinity (*divyau*) is applied to the conches of Krishna and Arjuna in verse 14 Bhishma's dominant position among his own people could be compared to that of Moses with his chosen people, beside Jesus who was the Light of the world

[13] *tatah-sankhas cha bheryas cha*
panavanaka gomukhah
sahasai 'va 'bhyahanyanta
sa sabdas tumulo 'bhavat

Then conches and drums and gongs, (other) drums, horns, were played together suddenly, and that sound made a confused clang

Note here the variety of instruments which are sounded together, and the gentle disparagement implied when it says that the sound was *tumula* which means "excited, confused sound"—a chaotic condition, something like the confusion of tongues of the Tower of Babel seeming to be suggested. This is a natural prerequisite for the orderly unitive teaching of *Brahmavidya* (Science of the Absolute) which is to follow

[14] *tatah svetair hayair yukte*
mahati syandane sthitau
madhavah pandavas chai 'va
divyau sankhau pradadhmatuh

Then (both) standing in their great chariot, to which white horses were yoked, Madhava (Krishna) and the son of Pandu (Arjuna) blew (the two together) their divine conches

Here we must notice the magic circle round the two personalities of Krishna and Arjuna, as if they were bracketed together, and having equal status in the context of something superior to merely human values Both their conches have the coupling epithet *divyau sankhau* (a pair of divine conches). Further they are in the same chariot—the charioteer as we know turns out to be the teacher of *Brahmavidya* (the Science of the Absolute) and Arjuna accepts discipleship (II, 7) The epithet *mahati* (great) is allied to *brihat* from which the word *brahma* is derived The white horses are also symbolic of the

neutrality of *Brahmavidya* in the same way as the white raiment (*shubravastra*) and white lotus (*sveta padma*) are symbolic of the same neutrality in descriptions of the goddess Saraswati The names *Madhavah* and *Pandavah* suggest the intimate familial relationship of Krishna and Arjuna, though not the *Guru-Sishya* relationship of a later stage *Subhadra* the sister of Krishna was espoused by Arjuna *Mādhava* suggests a descendant of Madhu of the Yadava clan of whom Arjuna is a kinsman The kinship is relevant here against the sishyahood to come later We must be on the lookout for similar appellations of Krishna and Arjuna throughout as indicative of the kind of context in which the text is to be understood, chapter after chapter, until full fledged absolutism is finally reached Patterns of spirituality of different contexts are revealed by such epithets

[15] *panchajanyam hrishikeso*
devadattam dhanamjayah
paundram dadhmau mahasankham
bhimakarmā vrikodarah

Hrishikesa (Krishna) blew Panchajanya, and Arjuna blew Devadatta He of wolf like appetite and deeds of enormity (Bhīma) blew his great conch, Paundra

Pānchajanya, the conch shell of Krishna, may be said to belong to the context of the Panchajanas who can be taken to be either the heterodox group near or about the Yādava country, perhaps outside the pale of Vedism, or as representing more symbolically the five component parts of the soul according to the Sāmkhyas (Rationalists) Arjuna s conch-shell, called Devadatta (given by God) seems to suggest his appreciation of Vedic values—being a disciple of Drona—till his final disillusionment on the subject later on Arjuna is not merely a *pitriyani* or worshipper of forefathers Hence the reference to the gods or *devas* The conch shell Pānchajanya also bears reference in legend to being sea formed out of the bones of a sea giant

Paundra, the conch shell of Bhima on the other hand, is suggestive of a prehistoric Siva pattern of spirituality (*tripundara* being the mark on Siva s forehead) Epithets applied to Bhima also suggest the common man of that prehistoric time who just believed in plain human values based on common

appetites, as the epithet *vrikodarah* meaning wolf-stomach would imply. He is the tough-guy or Hercules who takes a matter-of-fact attitude to life without flourishes or trimmings. Such a description is not repugnant to the character of Bhīma as portrayed in the rest of the *Mahābhārata.*

[16] *anantavijayam rājā*
kuntīputro yudhishthirah
nakulah sahadevas cha
sughosha manipushpakau

Prince Yudhishthira, son of Kuntī, blew Anantavijaya and Nakula and Sahadeva blew (together) the Sughosha and Manipushpaka.

Yudhishthira: firm in battle: eldest of the five sons of Pāndu. *Nakula* and *Sahadeva:* fourth and fifth (youngest) of the Pāndu princes.

The name *Anantavijaya* (endless victory) is an apt name for the conch of Yudhishthira, in view of what the prince's name itself means, " firm in battle ". Both steadiness and endless victory may be said to go together. Notice here that in a proper order of precedence King Yudhishthira should have blown his conch before Arjuna and the Charioteer Krishna. He is given a secondary place with the other two princes, Nakula and Sahadeva, whose conches Sughosha (good sounding) and *Manipushpaka* (floral-gemmed) suggest aesthetic values. Virtue and aesthetics do not count so much as the divine absolutism represented by Krishna and Arjuna. Even the common human value represented by Bhīma, is given precedence over mere moral firmness and aesthetics in the poetical justice of the author Vyāsa, common humanity being a more universal value than items of mere virtue or luxury.

[17] *kāsyas cha parameshvāsah*
sikhandī cha mahārathah
dhrishtadyumno virātas cha
sātyakis cha 'parājitah

And the King of Kāsi, excellent bowman; Sikhandīn, great charioteer Dhrishtadyumna and Virāta and the unconquered Sātyaki;

The names of particular conch-shells are not referred to any more The reference is made rather to bowmen and charioteers On the Kaurava side it should be remarked that only one man, Bhishma, blew a conch-shell of any unique nature The rest was a hullabaloo of clanging instruments On the Pandava side, on the other hand, the clarion calls of the conches come in clear graded succession, in which a scale of values can be discerned—until this is also lost in the common general uproar of the ranks

[18] *drupado draupadeyas cha*
sarvasah prithivipate
saubhadras cha mahabahuh
sankhan dadhmuh prithak-prithak

Drupada and the sons of Draupadi, O Lord of the Earth, and the son of Subhadra, of mighty arms, from all sides each blew his conch separately

The words *sarvasah* (on all sides) and *prithak-prithak* (distinct, separate) show that individual conch-blowings were not completely lost in the general din which came from all sides This suggests the meeting of the one and the many without contradiction, itself a secret of dialectics

[19] *sa ghosho dhartarashtranam*
hridayani vyadarayat
nabhas cha prithivim chai 'va
tumulo vyanunādayan

That loud blast, filling earth and sky with sound, pierced the hearts of Dhritarashtra's sons

This blast from the Pāndava side " pierced the hearts of the Kaurvas " It touched earth and sky " i e included all possible hierophantic values as against the mere earthy confusion of the conch-blasts of the Kauravas Bhishma's leonine roar only touches the earth In what sense were the hearts of the Kauravas bitten-through to the extent that *they lost confidence in* all the mundane things they held dear? New values involving both heaven as well as earth seemed to be implicit in the message of the blast of the Pāndavas

[20] *atha vyavasthitān drishtva*
dhartarāshtran kapidhvajah
pravritte sastrasampate
dhanur udyamya pāndavah

Then, beholding the sons of Dhritarāshtra standing marshalled in order, while the flight of arrows (was) beginning, the son of Pāndu (Arjuna) of monkey-ensign, took up his bow,

[21] *hrishikesam tada vakyam*
idam aha mahipate
senayor ubhayor madhye
ratham sthapaya me 'chyuta

And O King, (said Sanjaya) he (Arjuna) spoke thus to Hrishikesa (Krishna) Arjuna said O Achyuta! stop my chariot right in the middle between the two armies

It is most important to note the content of the last line of verse 20, which says that the shower of arrows was starting and Arjuna had already taken up his bow Up to this point it is clear that as a warrior he is not suffering from any weak-heartedness or doubt It is usual for the generality of commentators from raw undergraduates to much labelled academicians who claim to expound the Gita, to miss this point and to describe Arjuna as if he was an ordinary coward afraid of battle He is to be distinguished from Uttara, another well known character in the *Mahabharata* who conforms to the pattern of a mere coward Arjuna is a seasoned warrior He has seen many a battle before To mistake him for a coward would be to miss the true character of his confusion which is of a philosophical order as we shall see

The literary device of the first drop curtain (see Introduction) is abandoned or lifted here with the word *mahipati* (King) at the end of the first line of verse 21 Henceforth we enter the Krishna Arjuna *samvada* or dialogue

Actual circumstances belonging to this first part should not be mixed up with considerations pertaining to the part that follows. This latter takes a more abstract or philosophical turn, though only of a first degree for the present

The second line of verse 21 "Stop my chariot, O Achyuta, between the two armies" does not suggest anything of cowardice either Arjuna is prepared to risk going into the no-man's land between the two armies, of which everyone who knows warfare ancient or modern can understand the danger

To know the nature of Arjuna's peculiar confusion we have to be exact about all these details, and determine precisely the circumstances which favoured this characteristic confusion, from which, as a typical sceptic or *purva pakshin*, Arjuna is to suffer, according to the author Vyasa Let us watch out for that moment The words *me achyuta* shows familiarity and Achyuta (the immovable) already signifies something spiritual

[22] *yavad etan nirikshe 'ham*
yoddhukaman avasthitān
kair maya saha yoddhavyam
asmin ranasamudyame

So that I may behold these standing eager to fight by my side in the present battle undertaking,

[23] *yotsamanan avekshe 'ham*
ya ete 'tra samagatah
dhārtarashtrasya durbuddher
yuddhe priyachikirshavah

And might observe these here gathered together who desire to please in war the evil minded son of Dhritarashtra

These verses are meant to be taken together This is significant For the first time the two sides of the army tend to be thought of together—*not in the usual way of looking only* at the enemy To an ordinary fighter his enemies have prime importance Arjuna being already spiritually inclined, says here definitely that he wants to go to the middle of the two armies, equi distant from either of them, *so that he could see* not only the army that he is to fight *with* but also the army he is to fight *against* He wants to see both in one unitive view from a central neutral position

The second line of verse 23 seems *laboured It might seem to contain too many* words in naming the enemy, but he uses the long description to demarcate clearly the counterparts

of the dialectical situation we have referred to already Arjuna is still conscious of the distinction between right and wrong—he is not at all confused here, because of the epithet *durbuddhi* (bad minded) he uses against Duryodhana and the whole army treated unitively as a single counterpart Common to both parties is the thirst for battle This indicates that the situation is already surcharged with war minded ness Arjuna is caught in this longing for battle Such indications take the edge out of the argument, usually advanced that Krishna was himself war minded or that he *ordered* or even encouraged Arjuna to fight He only enabled Arjuna to recognize with clarity the imperative nature of the situation in which he was already involved by necessity

The two verses together which read so redundant, have only one purpose, which is to stress the difference between Duryodhana s one sided attitude of diffidence in verse 10 as against Arjuna s own in which both parties are equally in volved This altogether changes the complexion of Arjuna s state of confusion, because he begins to view the problem from a more unitive or humanistic standpoint This is not far removed from the sentiment of *ahimsa* (compassion or non killing) However, this *ahimsa* for the present does not en compass the whole of life nor the whole of humanity, which would be true contemplative compassion but, as we shall see is limited to his own tribe or at best includes his friends (I 38) Arjuna s hatred for Duryodhana still persists

Samjaya uvacha

[24] *evam ukto hrishikeso*
gudakesena bharata
senayor ubhayor madhye
sthapayitva rathottamam

Samjaya said
Thus addressed by Gudakesa (Arjuna), Hrishikesa (Krishna) O Bharata (Dhritarashtra) having stationed that excellent chariot right in the middle between the two armies

The discussion now enters the field of spiritual values Between the two armies is again underlined here to remind us of the requirements of the dialectical situation

[25] *bhishmadrona pramukhatah*
sarvesham cha mahikshitam
uvacha partha pasyai tan
samavetan kurun iti

Facing Bhishma and Drona and all the rulers of the earth (Krishna) said O Partha (Arjuna)! behold these Kurus gathered (here)

We should note how Krishna is careful not to influence Arjuna s mind in any other way than what would be most normal He does not want Arjuna to look on both s des, because he knows that might confuse him and carefully places Arjuna facing Bhishma and Drona of the opposing armies only and what is more explicit he says behold these Kurus and not both these armies Much trouble is taken by the author Vyasa to make these matters unequivocal

[26] *tatra pasyat sthitan parthah*
pitrin atha pitamahan
acharyan matulan bhratrin
putran pautran sakhims tatha

Then Partha (Arjuna) saw standing fathers as well as grandfathers teachers maternal uncles brothers sons grandsons and companions too

Arjuna begins by see ng on the enemy s side many of his own kith and kin bes des teachers His confus on has thus reason for beginning to be strengthened

[27] *svasuran suhridas chai va*
senayor ubhayor api
tan samikshya sa kaunteyah
sarvan bandhun avasthitan

And the son of Kunti (Arjuna) also seeing these relatives fathers-in law and friends all standing in both the armies—

The confusion worsens because he finds kith and kin not only in the opposite army but on *both* sides Confus on thus becomes more confounded thus starting the real trouble with

which the rest of the Gita is concerned The reference in this verse to his friends or relations in both the armies is important for the right appraisal of the delicate dialectics to follow This is the circumstance that finally succeeds in overwhelming this battle veteran and hero

[28] *kripaya paraya 'vishto*
vishidann idam abravit
drishtve 'mam svajanam krishna
yyutsum samupasthitam

Filled by a supreme pity, in mental distress (Arjuna) said Beholding my own people, O Krishna, standing together, wanting to fight

The nature of Arjuna's state of mind is described by the first words *kripaya paraya*, usually translated as "great pity" or "melted with pity" Such translations are inadequate to bring out that special state of mind intended here *Paraya* definitely means of a transcendental or supreme order What kind of pity is this which is here qualified as supreme? It is supreme to the extent that it envisages both the sides involved in the conflict with at least the first degree of dispassionate equality But a residual conflict still seems to persist in Arjuna s mind—in the second line where there is reference to *svajanam* (my own people) This shows he is still a relativist and not a thorough going absolutist in his way of thinking The duality of ' my own people versus strangers ' remains Hence the characteristic *vishada* or ' dejection " of this chapter

[29] *sidanti mama gatrani*
mukham cha parisushyati
vepathus cha sarire me
romaharshas cha jayate

My limbs fail and my mouth dries up, my body trembles and my hair stands on end,

[30] *gandivam sramsate hastat*
tvak cai va paridahyate
na cha saknomy avasthatum
bhramati va cha me manah

(the bow) Gandiva slips from my hand and my skin feels as if burning all over, and I am unable to stand and my mind is whirling round as it were,

The list of symptoms enumerated here are not those exactly known to normal psychology or pathology Among them is one very intriguingly desribed as *romaharshas* (hair standing on end) It is an expression familiar in India It marks a state of exaltation or ecstasy when a sentiment thrills the body mind It is not always due to fear as has been held The kinship of the other symptoms covered in these verses to the state of mind of Sri Rama in the first chapters of the *Yoga Vasishtha* might help us in forming a correct idea about its true character It really belongs to the mystical rather than to the merely pathological or psychological order The bow slips from his hand and this taken with his giddiness shows general lassitude or a lack of zest or interest in life in general rather than any fear Lack of zest leads to a second stage marked in i 47 where he makes up his mind to throw away his bow with its arrow A still further third stage of the conflict of Arjuna is marked in ii, 8 and 9 where it is of a more philosophical or religious order

[31] *nimittani cha pasyami*
viparitani kesava
na cha sreyo r upasyami
hatva svajanam ahave

And I see conflicting portents O Kesava (Krishna) nor do I foresee good from killing one s own people in battle

The enumeration of the symptoms continues here into a more delicate domain Premonitions are referred to They are described as *viparitani* often translated as adverse but this should be more properly translated contrary or contradictory i e at one moment good at another bad —but not all the time bad

The second line mentions spiritual factors proper, when the conflict is conceived in the form of a doubt thus emerging from mere feelings into the domain of morals. *Arjuna sees no moral or spiritual merit in killing kinsmen* Thus he is capable of formulating an opinion, although

confused. His is therefore no ordinary confusion, fear or sadness.

[32] *na kānkshe vijayam krishna*
na cha rajyam sukhāni cha
kim no rājyena govinda
kim bhogair jīvitena vā

I do not wish for victory, O Krishna, nor kingdom nor pleasures; what is kingdom to us, O Govinda (Krishna), what enjoyment, or even life!

Arjuna's stand is further finalized here. He has what is known as *vairāgya* or detachment from the usual attractions or lures of life. This *vairāgya* is not different in essence from what is required of a *brahmachāri* as a seeker of wisdom who is to have *nitya-anitya-viveka* (discrimination between eternal and non-eternal). There is no confusion here. It conforms to what is traditionally laid down as a prerequisite for spiritual life even of a Vedāntin. *Tyāga* (relinquishment) and *vairāgya* (detachment) have always been considered essential for the wisdom-seeker. Arjuna here is like a wise man or correct absolutist. Arjuna's superiority here to a mere coward, as evident in this verse, has to be kept in mind to avoid mistaking the true nature of his conflict. By using the first personal plural *nah* " us " here, he further takes it for granted that Krishna is bound to agree with him.

[33] *yeshām arthe kānkshitam no*
rājyam bhogāh sukhāni cha
ta ime 'vasthitā yuddhe
prānāma tyaktvā dhanāni cha

They for whose sake kingdoms, enjoyments and pleasures are desired by us, are standing here in battle, having renounced their interests in life and wealth.

Here Arjuna suddenly relapses into a partially relativist standpoint such as we have noticed already. The inconsistency mentioned by Krishna in II, 11 becomes apt in the light of this wavering alternation between an outright absolutism and a confused form of relativism, even though the latter is not without a touch of humanity implying contemplation.

We should note that Arjuna s confusion is treated in two distinct instalments within the limits of the first chapter the confusion is of a vaguer, more emotional order (I, 47), while its continuation in the earlier part of the next chapter (II, 8 and 9) is expressed in more properly formulated terms The character of the confusion which is legitimately Vedantic in its nature, becomes fully evident only in II, 8 In the light of that definitive verse, all the preceding verses must be understood The transition from a puranic (i e legend of a sacred character) to a Vedantic (i e philosophical) context takes place between these two chapters The unformulated and elaborate remarks of Arjuna belonging to the *pitriyana* or ancestor worship pattern of spirituality which he normally represents becomes marked in the verses that now follow

[34] *ăcharyah pitarah putras*
tathai va cha pitamahah
matulah svasurah pautrah
syalah sambandhinas tatha

Teachers, fathers, sons and also grandfathers, maternal uncles fathers in law grandsons brothers in law as well as (other) kinsmen

[35] *etan na hantum ichchhami*
ghnato pi madhusudana
api trailokyarajyasya
hetoh kim nu mahikrite

These I do not want to kill though (they kill me) O Madhusudana (Krishna) not even for the sake of dominion over the three worlds—how then for the sake of the earth?

The *acharyah* (teachers) mentioned here in verse 34 evidently refers to Drona Kripa and others if any The last word in the first line *pitamahah* (grandfathers) must apply primarily to Bhishma Drona is only a guru to the extent that he is a brahmin priest or a teacher of archery He is not a Guru in the same sense that Krishna is a Guru Krishna is a Guru proper

No confusion or vagueness is reflected in these decisive words They are based on a prime conviction of the part of

Arjuna which is right as far as it goes Neither Krishna himself nor any critic of Arjuna has met Arjuna's objection fairly to the present day If Arjuna was wrong why did not his Guru Krishna correct him then and there? Those who find fault with Arjuna too easily do not put their finger precisely on any objectionable part of his stand here The inference should be that Arjuna's stand remains valid At least there is nothing weak in his position Only someone capable of advancing a better reason than Arjuna would be justified in criticising him, which is the privilege reserved in the Gita only for Krishna who is the teacher of thoroughgoing absolutism, as we see him teaching later Politicians or patriots and partisans of closed religious groups even when they might be speaking in the name of values understood in any relativist sense, should be considered as being outside the privilege of laughing at Arjuna here, which is that of Krishna as Guru alone, or else of a teacher of outright absolutism

The reference here to the three worlds prepares the way for the attitude implicit in II, 8, where it is stated more finally but with only two worlds referred to This might be because the *pitriyana* (way of the forefathers) has reference to Hades or *Patala*, while purer spirituality of the Vedas thinks in terms of earth and heaven only, with *Bhuvarloka* an intervening world of ether sometimes mentioned, and frequented by celestial beings called Siddhas

[36] *nihatya dhartarashtran nah*
ka pritih syaj janardana
papam eva 'srayed asman
hatvai 'tan atatayinah

Having killed the sons of Dhritarashtra, what delight can there be for us, O Janardana (Krishna)? Only sin would come to us after killing this marauding rabble

It is striking to notice that *tyāga* or relinquishment is taken for granted in the spiritual pattern to which Arjuna conforms Benefits of success here or hereafter do not occur to him This might be because his spirituality has been nurtured in the pre Aryan pattern of forest dwelling hermits with whom the India of that day must have abounded, especially towards the south The *Ramayana* (epic history of Rama) makes the

difference quite clear between the Aryan north and the non-Aryan matrix of the south of India Rama and Lakshmana grew matted hair and lived on roots and fruits, renouncing all pleasures of a city life and visited many hermits wearing tree bark clothes This is the touching aspect of Indian spirituality into which Arjuna here can be imagined to fit

The word *atatayinah* does not merely mean desperadoes It means greedy opportunists persons infatuated with wrong or exaggerated notions of worldly values who readily resort to premature aggression If the meaning of the word is to be further clarified it can only be done by taking Arjuna s attitude of not wanting pleasure at all as its opposite or counterpart Such an interpretation would be in keeping with the style of the Gita as we have pointed out, like the word *raja-satyaga* (wilful relinquishment) of xviii, 8—renunciation with a vengeance as it were This is to be balanced against proneness to greed Some people are easily greedy They grab and take advantage of a situation Others give in too much Both of these miss the neutral middle way, which is that of the complete absolutist to be understood as we shall see, from the Gita At any rate the author, by this word *atatayinah* wants to indicate that the army of the Kauravas is not motivated by any higher moral or spiritual considerations than just greed or attachment, as fully explained in xvii, 7 to 19 inclusive

[37] *tasman na rha vayam hantum*
dhartarastran svabandhavan
svajanam hi katham hatva
sukhinah syama madhava

And so we ought not to kill the sons of Dhritarashtra our relations for how indeed can we be happy after killing our own people O Madhava (Krishna)?

The tendency to be too negative is brought out here Once again pointed reference is made to the fact that the Kauravas are Arjuna s relations Although kindness would be legitimate, kindness to a selected group of relations would fall outside the scope of the spirituality proper of the Gita

[38] *yady apy ete na pasyanti*
lobhopahatachetasah

kulakshayakritam dosham
mitradrohe cha patakam

Even if they whose minds are overpowered by greed see no wrong in the destruction of family (and) no crime in treachery to friends,

[39] *katham na jneyam asmabhih*
papad asman nivartitum
kulakshayakritam dosham
prapasyadbhir janardana

Yet why should we not learn to turn away from this sin, we who do see wrong in the destruction of family, O Janardana (Krishna)?

Here we come to considerations of wisdom or intelligence Arjuna says in effect, ' Why should we not be wise as against the foolishness of our relations?" Though Arjuna bases his argument on wisdom, it still lacks the balanced or neutral way of absolutism, leaving it still vitiated by relativist considerations At the end of verse 39 we find Arjuna still concerned about the destruction of the family

[40] *kulakshaye pranasyanti*
kuladharmah sanatanah
dharme nashte kulam kritsnam
adharmo bhibhavaty uta

In destruction of family, the immemorial clan traditions perish, and on the loss of tradition the whole clan comes under the sway of lawlessness

Arjuna here develops his own version of the evils of war—not in terms of humanity as a whole, but in terms of a closed or chosen group of people whose future is dear to him It is easy to concede that the killing out of some important men in a family would lead to disruption of their normal life—not only in a biological sense but as representing a particular cultural growth including certain spiritual values belonging to that clan No one can deny here again that Arjuna is right in what he says His only fault could be that he does not

conform to the highest standards of the absolutist way of life.

[41] *adharmabhibhavat krishna*
pradushyanti kulastriyah
strishu dushtasu varshneya
jayate varnasamkarah

When wrong (ways) prevail, O Krishna, the women of the family become corrupt and when women become corrupt, O Vārshneya (Krishna), mixing of clans arises

Here the reference evidently is to racial mixing which takes place generally in the wake of war between different coloured peoples The fair Aryans and the darker prehistoric peoples of India are the groups involved The complexion that is generally given to this argument is quite the opposite of what it should be when we take note of the fact that *Arjuna and the women concerred here were non-Aryans* They were of the darker-skinned peoples of India Therefore this reference to Arjuna's fears regarding tribal or at best racial mixing should not be taken to lend any support to *varnashramadharma* (caste system) as understood at the present day in India *Samkara* (mixing) as a philosophical concept occurs in III, 24 and the theory of caste is referred to in IV, 13 and discussed in IX, 33 and in XVIII, 41 and following verses from a totally different perspective as we shall see

[42] *samkaro narakayai 'va*
kulaghnanam kulasya cha
patanti pitaro hy esham
luptapindodakakriyah

This mixing (of clans) leads (both the) family and the destroyers of the family to hell, for their ancestors fall when deprived of their offerings of rice-balls and water rites.

Here we see that according to the notions of Arjuna, the consequences of racial or tribal admixture is degradation into the nether-world both for those who are responsible for the killing as well as for the family after the killing is done Simultaneously the ancestors also suffer corresponding degradation

because of the lack of ritualistic support which will keep them in the *pitriloka* (world of the ancestors). Note too, that the *agnihotra*, the ritual fire-sacrifice of the Aryans, is prominent by its omission, as also any precise reference to four castes. The disciple Arjuna's vague and crude prejudices in such matters are corrected by Krishna the Guru later on in IV, 13, IX, 33, and XVIII, 41 ff.

[43] *doshair etaih kulaghnānām*
varnasamkarakārakaih
utsādyante jātidharmāh
kuladharmās cha sāsvatāh

By these misdeeds of the destroyers of families (causing intermixture of clans), the immemorial traditions of clan and family are destroyed.

Arjuna's elaboration here of a theory of *varnasamkara* (mixing of differently coloured peoples) and spiritual degradation of ancestors, conforms clearly to a pattern in the context of *pitriyāna* (ancestor worship), which represents the position of the *pūrva-pakshin* (anterior sceptic). There is reference to two other factors, namely *jātidharma* (family or tribal traditions) and *kuladharma* (clan traditions) also. Arjuna's position therefore suffers from some glaring errors which it would be advantageous to notice even now. Thinking of his relations and the particular group in front of him, Arjuna has a closed and static attitude. He is interested in preserving certain spiritual traditions of family and tribe which he wrongly imagines to be permanent. One has to contrast this closed static attitude with the open dynamic attitude implied in the words of Krishna, when he himself as an absolutist speaks of establishing *dharma* (right conduct) in the famous verses IV, 7 and 8. There it is universal and for all time (continuing "from age to age").

[44] *utasanna kuladharmānām*
manushyānām janārdana
narake niyatam vāso
bhavati 'ty anususruma

Men of families whose clan traditions are destroyed, O Janārdana (Krishna) are destined to live in hell—thus we have heard.

Arjuna's state of mind is continued here The arguments stated in the previous verse, it can be seen, do not cling together so as to produce any clear conviction regarding what he is aiming at In the present verse the diffidence in Arjuna becomes evident in the last words His theories are based on second-hand knowledge only *anususruma*—thus have we heard He has no reference to any *sastra* (text) Again there is nothing positive His speech is regretful and without the element of hope referring to heaven The attitude is negative as it refers only to *naraka* (hell) It must be this negative quality which justifies the charge by Krishna in II, 2 of *anaryajushtam* (unbecoming to an Aryan) As conquerors the Aryans must have brought a more positive form of spirituality, but one still condemned by Krishna in II, 42 to 46—thus clearly indicating that the revaluation of spirituality in the Gita is to be sought for as lying between the relativist *pitriyana* (way of the forefathers) and its counterpart, an equally relativist *devayāna* (way of the gods) represented, as we have said, by Bhīshma and Drona respectively

[45] *aho bata mahat pāpam*
kartum vyavasitā vayam
yad rajyasukhalobhena
hantum svajanam udyatah

Alas! a great sin are we engaged in committing in endeavouring to kill our own people through greed for the pleasures of kingdom!

Here Arjuna is obsessed by a sense of sin which is also a negative factor Although it must be said to his credit that he is a renouncer, and opposed to greedy grabbers like Duryodhana, who must keep even illegitimate things, Arjuna's only fault is that he is unable to find the middle way

[46] *yadi mam apratikaram*
asastram sastrapanayah
dhartarāshtrā rane hanyus
tan me kshemataram bhavet

It would be better for me, if the sons of Dhritarāshtra, arms in hand, should kill me, unarmed and unresisting, in the battle

Arjuna's one-sided attitude becomes yet more pronounced. He even goes to the extent of saying "that would be better" instead of remaining neutral, and thus avoiding the sense of sin. He wants to be aggressively neutral—in other words, he falls into the error of a *rājasatyāgī* (wilful, over-active relinquisher) as stated in XVIII, 8.

Politically-minded commentators on the Gita, whether they have thought in terms of passive resistance or as fighting for the freedom of a closed group, have invariably fallen into a variety of error that could be brought under *rājasik* (wilful, over-active) or *tāmasik* (negligent action based on ignorance) forms of action as explained in the last chapter of the Gita. We shall come to these in due course, but we want to say here that *satyagraha* (passive resistance) or *ahimsa* (non-violence), inasmuch as they are political weapons, have nothing in common with the teaching of the Gita, which never makes a virtue of necessity, although giving it due recognition. The Gita has often been directly or indirectly pressed into the service of perverted politicians and other interested people who held such doctrines of action; but to distort the pure teaching of the Gita in this way would be unjust and goes against the interests of India's spiritual heritage in whose name even these patriots speak. Relativist forms of war between closed or static groups, whether clans, tribes or races or even nations or religions, are not "righteous" according to the Gita teaching which takes humanity's welfare only into the scope of the word *dharma* (righteousness).

Samjaya uvācha

[47] *evam uktvā 'rjunah samkhye*
rathopastha upāvisat
visrijya sasaram chāpam
sokasamvignamānasah

Samjaya said:
Thus having spoken in the midst of the battle, Arjuna sat down in his chariot seat, casting aside his bow and arrow, his mind overwhelmed with sorrow.

Arjuna's attitude as seen in this verse has deflected from one of mere lassitude as in verse 30, where the bow slips of itself from his fingers, to one here where he himself actively *casts*

away both the bow and arrow If we remember that he took up his bow in verse 20 and began to be confused when he looked at his relations among those facing him in verse 27, we find him now in an opposite *volte face* attitude The intermediate gradations of this transition have been carefully indicated by the author Vyasa Now Arjuna is definitely overwhelmed by grief

Regarding the structure of this chapter this section is called the *Arjuna vishada yoga,* the Dialectical Conflict of Arjuna The conflict itself is examined within the limits of this chapter in a very systematic way This characteristic conflict starts when Arjuna sees his relations on both sides of the impend ing battle The state of despondency at the end of the chapter leaves him still undecided about what he should think finally, until he becomes immobilized Lost between the two horns of a dilemma, the sorrow is the same as his doubt His doubt has two reciprocal aspects, the sense of bravery and the sense of sin These neutralize each other into a central state not outside the context of yoga or contemplation

In this chapter Arjuna first appears on the scene as an ordinary hero, but at the end he becomes a typical *purva pakshin* or anterior sceptic full of doubts belonging to the Guru-Sishya context of wisdom or contemplation Within the four walls of this chapter, the arguments move in conformity with the strict norms of a dialectical method carefully thought out by the author From the point where Arjuna sees relations on both sides, to where he sinks in his seat as a characteristic doubter of values, one sees that the argument moves delicately between reciprocal factors or alternative possibilities of sin or evil

This justifies the chapter as a whole being considered a point of view or *darshana* of a *yoga sastra,* as the so called colophon at the end of the chapter claims it to be

In conclusion here we must say that it is remarkable how commentators have invariably said almost nothing on this first chapter, when there are so many precious indications of great epistemological and methodological value to be derived from it In fact a proper understanding of the first chapter provides us with a key to all the chapters Without this key commentaries are bound to be partially or totally vitiated Most of the commentators, one regrets to have to say, are entirely off the mark in their remarks about Arjuna s trouble Sankara, the best of them, is himself strangely silent with no comment at all on this first chapter

ity srimad bhagavadgitasupanishatsu brahmavidyāyām
yogasastre srikrishnārjuna samvāde
arjunavishadayogo nama prathamo 'dhyayah

Thus ends in the Upanishads of the Songs of God, in the Science of the Wisdom of the Absolute, in the Dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, the First Chapter entitled The Unitive or Contemplative Despondency of Arjuna

CHAPTER II

UNITIVE REASONING

Samkhya Yoga

WHEN we scan this chapter it is striking to note first of all that Arjuna s conflict is carried over from the previous chapter where we should normally have expected it to terminate The literary device of a Samjaya talking to a Dhritarashtra is again introduced Krishna himself tries to arouse Arjuna from his apparent inertia or lethargy by sharp stinging ex pressions but Arjuna instead of being cowed down by them justifies himself further in a manner that reflects a certain state of abandonment The metrical change in verses 5 to 8 indicates this This is usual throughout the work wherever it rises to a pitch of rhapsody where factors of feeling dominate Arguments as such are thrown into the background The *rishi* (sage-seer) style as found in the Vedas comes into evidence unmistakably

Here the structure of the verses attains a new dialectical perfection reciprocal expressions being used with a striking symmetry, neutralizing factors or values into a vague sense of wonder of the numinous Arjuna himself thus attains a new status in this chapter as a representative contemplative dis ciple who belongs to the Guru sishya context proper The word *sishya* (disciple) is expressly used to refer to this new status in verse 7

In verse 8 the nature of Arjuna s doubt is no longer mis takable He says categorically that nothing on this earth nor in heaven will cure him of his painful conflict He is not unlike Nachiketas of the *Katha* Upanishad who refuses boons belong ing to the relativist world In fact the structure of all the Upanishads reveals the same initial attitude of a disciple in one form or another Arjuna s conflict condition and attitude are no exception From the mere emotion of the first chapter here in the second chapter it attains the status of a philoso- phical doubt which he himself is quite capable of stating con sciously and precisely in conformity with other *shastras* (text books)

The nature of his sorrow is such as to dry up the *indriyas* or senses collectively He is numbed or dazed *intellectually*, while in the previous chapter his *mouth* was parched and he was trembling We should understand from the difference between Arjuna in these two phases in these two chapters, that the author in this second chapter enters into the subject proper This is where the *Gita-āchārya* (teacher) begins the role of a Guru, instead of being merely a charioteer who brings Arjuna's chariot into the midst of the ranged armies.

Krishna's role as an achārya is thus inaugurated properly with verse 11 The smile on his lips in verse 10 is characteristically in contrast with the pessimistic state of Arjuna who is gloomy and pensive Between this bright smile and the *tedium vitae* is to take place presently a normal dialectical revaluation of wisdom values

The value under the caption *Sāmkhya* (rationalism) is what is indicated as the general over-all concluding title of this chapter But we find that verse 39 draws a line between two distinct parts of the chapter itself This, however, is no objection, as the first part is a revaluation of *Samkhya* (heterodox rationalist school) in terms of yoga, and the second part is called *buddhi yoga* (rationalism treated again dialectically, i e as a yoga) *Buddhi-yoga*, which in essence is also rational, is here also stated in revalued terms as a yoga This intriguing term will be defined later in this chapter The title *Sāmkhya-Yoga* (Unitive Reasoning) for the whole chapter is therefore not unjustified If we should expect to find the pure *Śāmkhya* of Kapila in the earlier part of the chapter, we shall be disappointed This has been a fecund cause of confusion on the part of several critics of the *Gita* (*e g* Edgerton and Raju) who discredit the Gita as a systematic treatise of this score The Gita has an inner structure of its own, and each chapter (as we have stated in the Introduction) has its own frame of reference

A growing number of Western professors, among whom must be included many of their disciples who happen to be Indians, make the inexcusable error of thinking that the Gita is a theistic religious classic rather than a philosophical treatise, a *smriti* (code of laws as of Manu, Yajnavalkhya, Parashara, etc) or *dharma shastra* (textbook of social obligations) rather than a *shruti* (revealed wisdom utterance) or upanishad (wisdom teaching of a Guru)

When the discussion or *samvada* which is a philosophical discourse between Guru and sishya opens properly in this

second chapter, such a view is glaringly belied, for here we see that the discussion enters into the very heart of rationalism which is philosophy and cannot possibly be conceived to be either theological or religious in the plain meaning of these terms Full examination of the other chapters will enable us to establish firmly the fact that the Gita is first and foremost a philosophical work and that the references to matters of religious practice are only incidental and non-obligatory, covering aspects of applied wisdom only

Sāmkhya (rationalism) when treated unitively attains the status of a yoga, and *buddhi* (pure reason) when employed *to reconcile counterparts also attains to the same yoga status* That *samkhya* and yoga are the same has been plainly stated in v, 4-5. No possible doubt should remain about this as far as the author Vyāsa's attitude towards the two schools is concerned

Samjaya uvacha

[1] *tam tatha kripayā vishtam*
asrupurnakulekshanam
vishidantam idam vākyam
uvacha madhusudanah

Samjaya said
To him who was thus filled with tenderness (*kripa*), whose eyes were filled with tears, and agitated and who was in distress, the Destroyer of Madhu (Krishna) spoke these words

Kripaya avishtam The usual meaning given is that Arjuna was "overcome with pity" We should notice that the phrase *kripaya paraya vishto* has already appeared in I, 28 The *kripa*, "pity" there *has* sometimes been interpreted as *kripaya-aparaya* "non-transcendental pity'—correctly enough according to the rules of Samskrit grammar—but we need not stretch the meaning so far to see the distinction implied between the qualified *kripa* of the first chapter and the plain *kripa* here Further, the word comes from the same root from which the word *karpanya* "negative state of spirit" in II, 7 is derived. If we note further the expression in II, 49 *kripanah phalahetavah* (end motivated persons are poor), we can see that the term is used irrespective of the subject or object of pity Here in this

verse it is unqualified pity as distinct from pity for relations in an actual historical context as in Chapter I. This difference will become more definite philosophically with the words of Arjuna in the next verse.

Here the emotion of Arjuna undergoes some slight sublimation as we can see by comparison with I, 47. There he is just obstinate; here he melts into tears. The process of sublimation later on enables him to formulate his inner conflict in the form of a finalized doubt in verse 6, supported by a variety of dialectics of his own so masterfully enunciated in verse 5. The visible aspects of Arjuna's inner conflict are graphically described in the phrase *asrupūrnākulekshanam* (with both eyes agitated and filled with tears). He has become immobile here in all other respects except for his eyes. This detailed description makes him stand on the threshold of a truly contemplative life, as the agitation of the eyes being due to doubt only, affiliates him more closely to the context of contemplation.

The meaning of the *vishāda* (conflict) should also be understood in the sense of being nearer to a doubt than to any gross emotion.

Madhusūdana (Slayer of Madhu) as applied to Krishna, balances with Arjuna here as a non-combatant warrior in the field.

Srībhagavān uvācha

[2] *kutas tvā kasmalam idam*
vishame samupasthitam
anāryajustam asvargyam
akīrtikaram arjuna

Krishna said:
In (the midst of this) difficulty whence comes to you this dejection, typical of non-Aryans (*anārya*), heaven-barring and disreputable, O Arjuna?

Here the double literary device at the beginning of this chapter, of Samjaya reporting the actual dialogue in verse 1 and again in verse 9, as if the curtain drops and rises twice before the actual dialogue—the central *samvāda* proper which is to hold the stage—which begins properly in verse 11, has its own significance. It is in the light of this dramatic structure

that we must interpret the meaning of verses 2 and 3 particularly, otherwise the second line here which refers to factors such as *svarga* (heaven) and *kirti* (social reputation) and *anaryajushtam* (unworthy of an Aryan, implying racial prestige)—generally repugnant to the teaching of the Gita as a whole, as definitely discerned in later chapters—become inexplicable

The imperative need for action in this critical situation considered here in actual historical terms belongs to the canvas rather than the painting To identify it with the proper teaching of the Gita as many have done (see our remarks on the realism of Sri Aurobindo in the Introduction) is unpardonable.

The phrase *anaryajushtam* (dear to the non Aryans) deserves pointed attention From history we know that the Aryans subjugated India by grabbing more and more lands The common amorphous matrix constituting the greater part of India proper has always suffered from an over generous attitude which amounts to a form of defeatism Sri Rama, the Aryanized king of Ayodhya, who penetrated southwards, was received everywhere, even by Guha, not to speak of *rishis* and ashramites such as Shabari, with great respect and cordiality instead of opposition, with offerings of roots and fruits This passive or negative attitude characterized India even at the time of the invasion of Alexander, and has been confusing to the minds of all invaders ever since We may even consider that in recent history Gandhi's " passive fight " was too much for the puzzled foreigners who have left India as much out of bewilderment as for any other reason Such negativism has been expressed in many ways Some yogis taken to Rome by conquerors are known to have publicly burned themselves to death This marks the limit of such a negativist attitude This is the essentially non-Aryan character referred to here

Krishna is not opposed to this negative attitude, inasmuch as he preaches *nivritti marga*, the *via negativa* or path of negation proper to contemplation, but he wants it to be applied only *in the domain of wisdom* In the field of action he employs ordinary reasoning when *action* should be countered by its *reaction* in the ordinary sense That is why pointed reference is made here in this verse to *the critical situation* where the attitude of Arjuna becomes completely out of place, when we take into account how deeply Arjuna was actually involved or caught within the imperatively necessary aspects of the situation He did not realize that he had hardly any margin of choice left

[3] *klaibyam ma sma gamah pārtha*
nai 'tat tvayy upapadyate
kshudram hridayadaurbalyam
tyaktvo 'ttishtha paramtapa

Give not yourself to impotence, O Partha (Arjuna) It does not befit you Cast off this base faintheartedness, arise, O Terror of Foes!

Here Krishna further states his objections in piquant terms He refers even to faintheartedness with a view to goading Arjuna to action in the given situation, although the epithet would hardly apply to the veteran hero Krishna is not talking as a Gita *acharya* here at all, but rather as a charioteer and friend who finds his master in a confused plight, and therefore the further epithet *kshudram* (base) which would be too much ordinarily to be applied to Arjuna, becomes permissible only in the light of extreme familiarity and earnest interest in Arjuna as a friend The word *klaibyam* (impotent) is also too much, if not seen in the light of camaraderie

Many persons who have written about the Gita have too easily taken the side of Krishna here, and wanted, as it were, to pat Arjuna on the back patronizingly This privilege must be reserved for Krishna as a friend, or even for Krishna considered as a Gita *acharya* But for pandits, patriots and politicians, of the rank and file who are not his comrades, to use this same patronizing tone towards Arjuna's attitude is, to say the least, out of place, as Arjuna's position is superior to all of them, and inferior to Krishna or a Guru of equal status only

Arjuna uvacha

[4] *katham bhishmam aham samkhye*
dronam cha madhusudhana
ishubhih pratiyotsyami
pujarhav arisudana

Arjuna said
How could I, O Slayer of Madhu (Krishna), encounter with arrows in battle Bhishma and also Drona who are worthy of worship, O Slayer of Foes (Krishna)?

The definite and precise reference here by name, first to Bhishma and then to Drona, who are not Gurus in the same sense—*Bhishma being only respected as a grandsire*—but both equally covered by the title 'worthy of reverence', sharpens Arjuna's doubt to a further degree The instrument with which he is to fight them is also referred to, the relevance being that it was Drona who taught him archery, and it was to Bhishma that he could trace his physical prowess needed for archery These factors, the arrows and the two enemies, are looked upon as counterparts in the same plane of actuality, thus paving the way for the argument in the next verse, which underlines the nature of the dilemma in greater detail

The prefix *prati* (against) is used to accentuate the duality implicit in the situation, which seems to Arjuna to be absurd It is in fact absurd to anybody, in the way Arjuna puts it, and it can only be reasonable in a fully revalued way of absolutism implied in XVIII, 66 where all duties of relativist life are to be thrown away

[5] *gurun ahatva hi mahanubhavan*
sreyo bhoktum bhaikshyam api ha loke
hatva rthakamams tu gurun iha 'va
bhunjiya bhogan rudhirapradigdhan

Desisting from the killing of the Gurus who are highly honourable, it would be more meritorious in this world even to have to eat of a beggar s pittance Choosing (on the other hand) to kill these Gurus as fortune-seekers, I should be feasting even here on blood stained benefits of life

This verse shows Arjuna as one who can employ dialectics with a vengeance, leading to a doubly negative or unfavourable judgment Duryodhana who does not claim to be a dialectician can stand on simpler plainer and firmer ground Arjuna s difficulty which was hitherto stated strictly as within the domain of actuality that involved here and now values only, is in this verse restated with one important difference, indicated by the word *sreyas* (something morally or spiritually better) *thus introducing for* the first time into the discussion a positive spiritual value factor and not merely worldly advantage Even as such it does not refer to life hereafter as the repetition of *iha* (here) clearly indicates In fact it is Arjuna s

desire to be a better man even here itself which distinguishes him from Duryodhana He is an aspirant or a candidate for wisdom, though still a realist.

The metrical structure of this verse is meant to reveal an emotional content rising to the pitch—though not of a rhapsody here—at least to that of a spiritual agony or *angoisse* The note of this agony is not unlike that of Yama (Death), the Guru in the *Katha* Upanishad, who wailingly pleads with the sishya Nachiketas to dissuade him from asking the final boon of all, respecting wisdom There it is the Guru who wails, but it makes no difference to the quality of the rhetorical mode employed which is common to both Guru there and sishya here

Another peculiarity to note about this verse is that the same Gurus are referred to with almost opposite titles In one place they are called *mahanubhavas* (people of great sympathy) and at another place *arthakamaha* (grabbers of goods) This would seem paradoxical, and, except in the light of the special dialectical structure that we have suggested, it would remain unresolved In fact many have indeed mistranslated or misinterpreted the word *arthakamaha* so as to twist it out of its shape to suit their mechanistic way of thinking (*e g* it is translated " well wishers " by Bhagavan Das)

The word *iha* (here) appearing in its simple form in the second line, appears again repeated in the third line more emphatically as *iha eva* (here itself) which cannot be looked upon as accidentally inserted by the author Vyasa It is just here that Arjuna's dialectic fails to work as applied to value-factors, because both these value components belong to a here-and now order, but Arjuna has the excuse of speaking in this chapter as an empiricist or just as a rationalist As a correct sceptic ought to be, he puts the question in its sharpest form as any practically minded religious man even of our own times—scrupulous of life here—might do

In either of the alternatives, still treated dualistically by Arjuna after the manner of the *Nyaya Vaiseshikas* (logical-empiricists) or at best the *Samkhyas* (rationalists), the result for him is in the form of an adverse verdict He must either suffer poverty or enjoy life with a sense of the guilt of having out done a fellow man This doubly negative result is characteristic of a form of reasoning which appears very subtle at first sight, but is still tinged with the blemish of dualism—as Krishna will point out in due course According to Krishna who

is an absolutist, he is going to show how Arjuna can surmount his duality by the right use of dialectics by applying this method only to unitive values which come within the scope of contemplation, and not merely for decisions between alternative advantages here in the world of multiplicity and action Dialectics is conducive to unitive understanding only, and spoils the case when applied to ordinary situations in life where usual ratiocinative methods or logic would be the proper instrument to employ

It might be well also for us to note that the expression *ahatva* (not killing) has an artificial turn about it The choice of killing or not killing is either necessary or contingent Here, clearly, 'not killing' is not enforced on Arjuna It is a contingent factor from which he derives the theoretical consequences of poverty, etc, which factor and consequences are not directly connected as cause and effect He is sentimental and speaks like a theoretical philosopher when a practical necessity confronts him It is on this score that Krishna pulls him up quite readily in verse 11

Arjuna may be said to resemble a man who has a telescope, but who looks at it through the wrong end Instead of ascending from the necessary to the contingent he descends from factors which are not strictly of a necessary order to imaginary and conflicting necessities He is simply overwhelmed by a logic of emotions which goes always contrary to the logic of pure reason spoiling both natural spontaneity in emotion and purity of reason

[6] *na chai tad vidmah kataran no gariyo*
yad va jayema yadi va no jayeyuh
yan eva hatva na jijivishamas
te vasthitah pramukhe dhartarashtrah

Neither is it clear which would be of greater advantage to us that we win or that they win over us Killing whom we should no more wish to live those very persons are standing ranged before us the progeny of Dhritarashtra

The confounding of reason and emotion comes out here, each factor having equal force To add to the vagueness there is the express use of the plural He speaks now apparently almost as a representative of both the contending parties—

thus indirectly thinking of the evils of war in most general terms.

His concern, however, to save humanity from the given effects of war, seems to overleap itself when he again points to the sons of Dhritarāshtra—as if he is concerned more for them than for his own side, which commonsense should lead us to expect. Actually we find him more concerned for his enemies. This is because his logic is coloured by his emotions and he is carried beyond even the neutral ground of commonsense to an extreme position untenable either from commonsense or contemplative norms. His only excuse is perhaps that Bhīshma and Drona who belong to a spiritual context are both ranged against him. They represent spiritual values but happen to be on the enemy side which already enjoys a majority.

na jijivishāma (we do not wish to live)—can only legitimately mean that he is concerned with humanity who must be impoverished by the extermination of spiritual leaders or Gurus. Note his plural again here by which he speaks for all, including his enemies and Krishna himself.

[7] *karpanyadoshopahat svabhāvah*
prichchhāmi tvām dharmasammūdhachetāh
yach chhreyah syān nischitam brūhi tan me
sishyas to 'ham sādhi mām tvām prapannam

Struck down by the evil of a tender disposition, with a mind confounded in regard to what is right to do, I ask you: that which is definitely more meritorious, that do indicate to me. I am your disciple; do discipline me coming thus for refuge to you.

Now the style reverts to the singular. Here Arjuna is able himself to state clearly the nature of his trouble: (1) that a *negative state of mind* has overtaken him and (2) that his *reason* is therefore clouded about the choice before him. These are the two factors involved. The cure for one is clearer reasoning (heterodox *Sāmkhya yoga*). For the other the cure is the method of *buddhi-yoga* (orthodox rationalism treated unitively) which would make him more Aryan and relieve him of the sense of sin. These exactly are just the remedies to be applied by Krishna in the remainder of this chapter.

The word *dharma* (righteousness, connoting also inner tendencies to natural activity) is used by Arjuna both in the sense

of "conduct" as used by Buddhist writers, and in its purer psychological connotation

Although a warrior's sense of honour is appealed to by Krishna in verses 32 35 of this chapter, the main part of the chapter is concerned with rationalism of an 'objective" order The reference to honour, etc fit into this chapter as the commonsense counterparts or corollaries of a rational matter of fact attitude

The word *shreyah* (spiritually meritorious) again indicates a superior human value belonging to contemplative wisdom, especially when taken together with the word *sishya* (disciple) which makes him essentially not a warrior merely, but principally a wisdom seeker Also the word *sadhi* (teach) helps to confirm this way of looking at the situation This is the cue for the *samvada* or Guru sishya dialogue which is to hold the stage

[8] *na hi prapasyami mama 'panudyād*
yach chhokam uchchhosanam indriyanam
avapya bhumav asapatnam riddham
rajyam suranam api cha 'dhipatyam

I cannot visualize either what could rid me of this distress which dries up the senses in this way—even should (it transpire that) I obtain unrivalled dominion of the earth s plenty or overlordship of the gods in heaven too

The resemblance of Arjuna, who is here an equally thoroughgoing wisdom seeker, to Nachiketas of the *Katha* Upanishad (to whom we have already referred) becomes unmistakably evident here He is for the first time referring to heaven and lordship over the gods which itself is strange inasmuch as till now he was thinking of negative factors only He who preferred to be a mendicant begging his way now also refers to the uttermost limit of worldly prosperity He rejects both of these possible futures because they are only relative values, while he seeks merit in an absolute sense As a disciple in any other upanishad, the implications in this verse must make it indubitably clear to the reader that the Gita is not concerned with conduct here, or even the relative heaven-determined values of the Vedas, but only with ultimate or absolute factors of supreme wisdom Even the highest of the shining gods are to be left behind if Arjuna is to find satisfaction If Krishna

refers in his teaching hereafter to heaven and relativist values, they therefore become of incidental importance only (e g. verses II 32 and 37 mention heaven only for purpose of methodology. We shall clarify this in due course. Enough to state here that this has nothing to do with the final teaching of the Gita).

Like the third boon of Nachiketas, Arjuna is not going to be satisfied with anything short of the highest wisdom, for he indicates here that only such wisdom can cure him of his agony of spirit This condition of Arjuna is not symptomatic of any known pathological disease or psychological abnormality. It is only found expressed in such Guru sishya textbooks as the *Vivekachudamani* of Sankara—where the disciple compares himself to an animal trapped in a raging forest-fire (verse 36)

Samjaya uvācha

[9] *evam uktva hrishikesam*
gudakesah paramtapah
na yotsya iti govindam
uktvā tushnim babhuva ha

Samjaya said
Having spoken thus to Hrishikesa (Krishna), Gudakesa (Arjuna) the Terror of the Foe, saying, "I will not fight" to Govinda (Krishna), lapsed finally into silence.

[10] *tam uvācha hrishikesah*
prahasann iva bhārata
senayor ubhayor madhye
vishidantam idam vachah

On this Hrishikesa (Krishna), with a semblance of smiling, O Bhārata (Dhritarāshtra), spoke these words to him who was in grief between the two armies

The Samjaya-Dhritarashtra device is used for these two verses only, for the express purpose of setting the stage for the impending full-dress discourse which starts at verse 11, from which point onwards it becomes fully philosophical

These verses reveal the attendant circumstances in the actual world most delicately counterpoised in every respect, thus forming the correct defined situation on firm ground, upon

whose basis the theoretical discussion can proceed To the extent that the questioner is practically-minded, the answerer has to be downright conclusive in his reply The concrete question requires an apodictic reply It is tit for tat

Before the sweeping generalizations of Krishna follow, therefore, it is necessary to review in a short span the ensemble of the situation These two verses serve that very purpose

Hrishikesa and Gudākesa, balancing sound as well as meaning, suggest equality between Guru and disciple Reference is also made in favourite terms to *senayor ubhayor madhye* (between two armies) to indicate the perfect neutrality of the absolutist way of life preached by the Guru Krishna The smile of a Guru is the only factor differentiating him from the gloomy disciple

Vachah (the word) is singular and not plural This is most significant All the words used in the chapter are supposed to be *upavakyanam* (elaborations of one central Word), the *Verbum* or *Logos* or the AUM as definitely stated in the *Mandukya* Upanishad The same singular is strikingly repeated in X 1 and XI 1 So this cannot be just the accidental usage of the author Vyasa

Further, Arjuna definitely says "I will not fight" which hitherto he has not dared to say to Krishna It is this brazen attitude which should justify the oft repeated words of Krishna in later chapters, *in which he seems to order Arjuna to fight* Although the Gita is free from obligatory injunctions, this style of speech here arises incidentally from Arjuna's words. To the extent that such an admonition is meant to counteract this obstinacy, it is in place But the main character of such advice should be understood as *permissive and never fully mandatory*, because *vidhi* or mandate is repugnant altogether to an Upanishad which is a *shruti* (revealed utterance of wisdom) and not a *smriti* (code of laws) Those who interpret such expressions as injunctions will find themselves *completely in* the wrong by the time they reach the end of the Gita, wherein Krishna finally says to Arjuna ' Do as you like ' (xviii, 63) which, taken together with abandon all duties (xviii, 66) *makes the non mandatory character* of the reference to fighting unequivocal The various references to the subject of fighting will be dealt with as occasions arise The reader however, must watch out for a gradation or change of sense even in the permissive or advisory character according to the proper context of each chapter

Notice that Arjuna remains no whit less a warrior (Paramtapa—"Consumer of Foes") in spite of his being silent It is still the silence of a great hero and not that of a coward His doubt belongs to the realm of wisdom and not to his physical prowess

Sankara's long drawn comment on this verse to establish that 'knowledge alone, and not by knowledge conjoined with works as the conclusive teaching of the Gita, could be taken for granted by us in the present commentary without any arguments, because we look upon the Gita as a "dialectical revaluation' of wisdom into which obligatory works do not enter at all The Gita is not a *Dharma Shastra* or *Smriti* treating of obligatory injunctions Any reference to such in the Gita is incidental to the narrative or discussion and is of a recommending or permissive character only and never of an obligatory character

The term *iva* (as if) applied to the smile of Krishna is a peculiarity of the *lingua mystica* familiar in the Upanishads (*e g Mundaka* Upanishad, 1 2 4 6) by which the edge is, as it were, taken off the actuality of the description, tending to make it more perceptual and thus more in keeping with a contemplative text

Sribhagavan uvacha

[11] *asochyan anvasochas tvam*
prajnavadams cha bhashase
gatasum agatasums cha
na 'nusochanti panditah

Krishna said
You are sorry for those with whom sorrow is unreasonable You speak in terms of reason too Veritable philosophers (pandits) are not affected in regard to those whose breath has gone and those whose breath has not gone

We begin the *samvada* (Guru sishya dialogue on wisdom) noting straight away that it starts off in no uncertain words The position of a thorough going absolutist is stated for all it is worth to be elaborated stage by stage afterwards.

The second line of this verse has been much misunderstood and misinterpreted seriously enough to vitiate and compromise

the whole message of the Gita in commentaries by people who did not realize that the Gita is based on dialectical reasoning and not on mere ratiocination

Note the word *cha* (and) in this line which has *invariably* been taken to be identical or interchangeable with *va* (either or) Though seemingly small there is a world of difference between the two meanings The latter meaning would be tantamount to upholding a model of a spiritual man who is indifferent or cold hearted when a person is dead while the former meaning which conforms to the text and is the only meaning possible here supports a perfected wise man or pandit who has *transcended both the aspects of life and death here*, treated together as inevitable dual sides of our relative life here and now The Gita preaches *ahimsa* (non hurting) in later chapters Indifference in causing death is not therefore compatible with the teaching of the Gita at all Gandhi s Gita commentary has made an effort to make this clear by other evidences of his own which has left many people un convinced The delicate difference implied in this opening verse when properly understood would not require long drawn arguments to bend the Gita to support any special doctrine of *ahimsa* which is only a natural corollary to the Gita s chief *teaching of wisdom as we shall have ample occasion to see*

The word *panditah* refers expressly not to a man of action like Arjuna but to men of wisdom those who *understand* Between the two lines of this verse—the first one reflecting necessity the second one reflecting free contingency—the argu ment will be seen like a pendulum now swinging to the one side or the other The wide awake student of the Gita should not be too hasty or hurried in deriving rigid snap judgments about what the Gita teaches from isolated verses or lines—as has been done so often

Note that sorrow is the central consideration on which the verse revolves The concept of *shoka* (compassion) is the spiri tual value with which the dialogue begins The disparity between wisdom and sympathy reason and emotion is the subject for reconciliation—the one in terms of the other re *taining both unitively* by yoga The duality between the two persists in Arjuna producing a conflict or doubt which con stitutes the major problem of the Gita as a whole

That Arjuna himself has strongly rooted rival theori s about *right and wrong virtue and sin* is revealed in i 40 45 Now that he seeks nothing short of absolute wisdom as revealed in ii 8 it

is in reference to these two incompatible attitudes, one being still relativist, the other belonging to wisdom, that Krishna here speaks outrightly, pointing out the anomaly of Arjuna's position.

In understanding the meaning of *asochyan* (those not to be grieved for) we have to be guided by the indications in verse 5 above which refers to the Gurus, as well as by the absolutist ideas which follow immediately in this chapter Sankara suggests that the reference applies to such people as Bhishma and Drona and states "they deserve no grief for they are men of good conduct and are eternal in their real nature" Arjuna has enumerated in detail all those for whom he is concerned in I 34 Even if the two Gurus are exempt from the pity normal to the situation, the case of all others who include good, bad and indifferent persons on both the sides (as explicitly mentioned in I 27) is not covered by Sankara's explanation There is an over all answer to the question "Who are the persons meant here as not deserving or incapable of being sympathetically thought of?" which is contained in this very chapter (verses 12 to 38 inclusive) The same is again implied in XI 33 where Krishna states that the men have already been killed by him and his (Arjuna's) killing is only incidental to the situation This type of over all absolutist argument need be resorted to only last of all On the lines of Sankara's suggestion we could think of two groups to whom the remark can possibly apply Those emancipated from necessity by their intelligence and freedom of choice in action, like Bhishma and Drona who have deliberately chosen the path of war, and those like the rest of the rank and file caught helplessly in a general and imperative war situation The former can take care of themselves and the latter cannot, even if they thought that war was an evil

[12] *na tv eva 'ham jatu na 'sam*
na tvam ne 'me janadhipah
na chai 'va na bhavishyamah
sarve vayam atah param

Further, never was I non existent, nor you nor these chiefs of men neither shall we, all of us, ever cease becoming hereafter

The initial line of argument adopted in this chapter is clearly indicated here It makes the absolutist position more

striking than in the second line of verse 11 It asserts at once the eternal existence not only of the individual (or in terms of a subjective soul) but of the whole group of humanity in volved In fact the whole situation as we shall see shortly is treated *sub specie aeternitatis* (under the category of the eternal) as Spinoza put it The reference to the kings or chiefs of men as such who are also as it were to be considered eternal seems to be asking too much for us to believe In so far as no king can really die (The King is dead—Long Live the King) even this apparent exaggeration becomes justified

This chapter expressly faces the problem from an apodictic or sharply matter of fact point of view A bad disease needs a drastic remedy The rot of confusion has to be stopped before it worsens That is why the argument plunges without apology into the heart of the problem The impossible character of the arguments thus become understandable

Note also that eternity is conceived both retrospectively and prospectively The inner logical or methodological order maintained is striking Krishna refers to himself first Even as plural entities human beings are to be treated in the l ght of the eternal The conflict between the one and the many can be resolved in the light of higher reasoning as elsewhere explained

GENERAL NOTE ON VERSES 13 TO 21

The approach of heterodox Samkhya is evidenced in these verses but we should remember it is not Samkhya as Kapila or even Ishvarakrishna presented it in the *Samkhya Karika* that is here adhered to The Gita restates Samkhya to suit its own doctrine of the Absolute In other words the Gita is a d alectical revaluation in terms of yoga of pure Samkhya as such without omitting the techn cal terms belong ng to Sam khya method and not entirely breaking away from the epis temological frame of reference proper to the Samkhya system We should look here for a Samkhya yoga still v e ved from a heterodox angle leaving the same to be reviewed from an orthodox angle with *buddhi* (pure reason or intelligence) as a central value in the second half of this chapter after verse 39 and thereafter to be known under the caption of *buddhi yoga*—*buddhi* there being not essentially d fferent from the Samkhya attitude Both *buddhi* and Samkhya therefore are

covered by the general title *Samkhya yoga* without any real contradiction, at the end of the chapter

[13] *dehino 'smin yatha dehe*
kaumaram yauvanam jara
tatha dehantarapraptir
dhiras tatra na muhyati

As there is here in the body for the embodied, childhood, youth, old age, so also the passing on to another body in the same manner, those firm in mind are not thereby bewildered

Let us focus attention on the word *dehi* (body owner or author agent) It almost suggests some entity like Launcelot Gobbo's conscience which hangs at the neck of his heart, having an almost empirical status so repugnant to the way of thinking of the Buddhist Vijnānavadins, and no less so even with Advaitins of the Gaudapada school The apparent grossness here is explicable, since any theoretical discussion of a subject implies its own *purva pakshin* (anterior sceptic) and, in order to convince a person, one has to meet him on his own terms with his own background The empiricist has to be met by an empirical attribute, if it is to be revalued Rationalistic heterodox Samkhya tended to realism When the inner man had to be distinguished clearly from the physical man, it became necessary for the Gita to employ the word *dehi* (body-owner) with the same realism which we find accentuated, until by verse 23 all vestiges of materiality are abolished But this abolition begins significantly only after verse 22, which again is a kind of rhapsody where realism and idealism merge, as it were, bursting into song

This verse recommends a view of reality in the form of a flux pertaining to a general process of becoming Childhood youth and old age are three stages known even to realists, which are to be viewed, not statically, but as flowing organically in terms of duration Time itself is not yet abolished

Rebirth is introduced as a natural consequence belonging to the same order of flux or becoming Metempsychosis is therefore taken for granted as a natural corollary even of a realistic and rationalistic attitude to life The word *dhira* here refers not merely to a brave man on a battlefield, but perhaps

more aptly refers to one who is capable of taking a firm stand in a contemplative context He is a man of intuition and imagination and not a mere ratiocinator

[14] *matrasparsas tu kaunteya*
sitoshnaskhaduhkhadah
agamapayino nityas
tams titikshasva bharata

Momentary sense contacts on the other hand O Kaunteya (Arjuna) yielding cold warmth joy pain alternately coming and going are transitory Do you endure them O Bharata (Arjuna)

[15] *yam hi na vyathayanty ete*
purusham purusharshabha
samaduhkhasukham dhiram
so mritatvaya kalpate

That man indeed of firm mind who is unaffected by these O Best of Men (Arjuna) equal minded in joy as well as pain he is destined for immortality

After stating the position of a man of intuition verse 14 speaks of the opposite or counterpart—of reflexes and auto matisms belonging to physiology Stimulus response psy chology is involved here Pleasure and pain heat and cold belong to this order This is the domain of sheer necessity which no living be ng can escape Arjuna is here asked not to minimise their mportance as some vague philosophers might do or to learn to bear then stoically What cannot be cured must be endured

Such a hardened and brave man verse 15 indicates almost too hastily it might seem is fit for immortality a term usually applied only to the h ghest spiritual goal But we should note the reference to pain and pleasure as being *equa lized* before one qualifies for th s immortality

The modern stoic by definition has come to mean mere brute endurance But the yogi of the G ta who is referred to here is a man who enjoys as well as suffers with a certain neutral attitude which cancels one aga nst the other This makes all the difference for qualifying for immortality even in the fullest connotation of the term in Vedantic usage—as

one who has come to his full status as a yogi, equanimity being a positive quality and not mere indifference.

[16] *nā 'sato vidyate bhāvo*
nā 'bhāvo vidyate satah
ubhayor api drishto 'ntas tv
anayos tattvadarsibhih

What is unreal cannot have being and non-being cannot be real; the conclusion in regard to both these has been known to philosophers.

In this verse we have a clear enunciation of the methodology adopted in the Gita. Terms like *bhāva* and *abhāva* (becoming and non-becoming) are familiar to us in the Nyāya-Vaisheshikā system of philosophy, where the term *abhāva* (non-becoming) is the last of the seven *padārthas* (categories of cognizable entities).[1] Again, with reference to the word *sat* (existence-reality) we should note it is not very different from the notion of *dravya* (substance) used in the same system, for even the mind is there considered as a substance. Substances in this sense are considered as *paramānu* (atomic or exceedingly refined prime matter). The word *sat* as employed in this verse has, over and above the substantiality of the Nyāya-Vaisheshika context, some connotation of its own as reality understood in neutral terms as between existence and non-existence. While the cancelling-out of existence with non-existence might lead to *shunya* or emptiness, the *sat* of the Vedānta of the Gita is meant to represent the Absolute. The difference will perhaps become clear if explained in mathematical terms; if we subtract two equal quantities, the answer is zero. But in the case of the operation in the form of a fraction the result is not a zero but a one (10 minus 10 = 0; $\frac{10}{10}$ = 1). The unitive Absolute is similarly to be understood as different from the mere nothingness which results from a mechanistic form of reasoning. Unitive reasoning is based upon an intuitive or dialectical awareness.

In the *Gaudapāda Kārikā* (IV, 4 *et seq*) reference is made to the very problem implicit in this verse. Gaudapāda takes the

[1] See *A Primer of Indian Logic* (*According to Annambhatta's Tarkasamgraha*) by S Kuppuswami Sāstri (P Varadachary & Co. Madras, 1932) *dravya-guna-karma-samanya-vishesa samavayabhavah sapta padarthah* · v 2, (substance, quality, action, generality speciality, inherence and non-becoming are the seven categories of cognizable entities)

case of two disputants—one a Vaishesika who argues that there is no anterior cause to empirical reality, while the other is a Sāmkhyan who says there is a cause which regresses *ad infinitum*. Between these two disputants nothing is decided about the final nature of reality Sankara in his commentary seems to exploit the situation as an argument in favour of a positive notion about *Brahman* (the Absolute). Whether he legitimately succeeds in establishing a positive Brahman on the basis of a mere disagreement between these disputants is questionable The Gita, however, scores better than the *Karika* when it states here that the disputants are not still disputing but have resolved their disputes in terms of a finalized doctrine—the *anta* (end) in the second line of this verse This we can easily see is the *anta* which is present in the Vedānta (*Veda-anta*) as it is to be understood in the Gita

There can be no question either in regard to the schools of thought under reference here by the term *tattvadarsibhih* (those capable of seeing first principles) The word *tattva* (that-ness) is known to us even in the *mahā-vakyas* (great sayings) such as *aum tat-sat* (Aum that is) or *tat tvam-asi* (That thou art)—apart from its familiarity in the rationalistic schools anterior to Vedanta, such as the Sāmkhya *Tattva* comes close to Kant's *ding an-sich* (thing-in-itself) and Spinoza's *substantia* (underlying substantiality) This verse satisfies itself for the present to leave this absolutist concept open for further elaboration in this chapter meeting empirical requirements, while elsewhere other relevant ways are dealt with

The words *ubhayor api* (both taken together) have special significance which we know as the distinguishing mark of the methodology proper of dialectical or yogic reasoning, (see p 49, Introduction) In the *Īshā Upanishad* (11-14) two striking examples occur, showing this same double-sided method of reasoning *Sambhuti* (becoming) and *vinasha* (destruction or non-becoming) are to be understood *ubhayam saha* (both taken together), i e not singly *Vidyā* (knowledge) and *avidyā* (nescience) are also treated in the same way. Both pairs of opposites must be treated unitively to bring out a central notion which pertains to the Absolute We know in the West also philosophers have been referring to a one-legged argument or a lame excuse to mean something untenable The pros and cons have to be taken together, the obverse and reverse of the same coin, these, and many other phrases point to the same necessity in valid thinking This is the essential

distinguishing feature of dialectic or yogic reasoning, where intuition comes into play, rather than remaining merely logical in a factual manner We shall find other expressions like *api cha* (also, and) scattered throughout the Gita text These are not necessary requirements of syntax, if the reasoning is merely mechanistic, but they do become essential only for delicate dialectical purposes Most translators treat this distinction in a casual manner, because they are unconscious of the difference between the two styles—the merely rational and the dialectical ways of exposition In Bhagavan Das' Introduction to the Gita he refers to the profuse use of such expressions as superfluous and as having no significance (*The Bhagavad Gita*, p 36, 3rd ed , 1940)

The difference is not to be lightly brushed aside in view of the finalized doctrine which must emerge from the method employed Passing through the vicissitudes of the *shunyavada* and the *vijnanavada* (doctrines of emptiness and subjective idealism) as understood in the Jaina or Buddhist contexts, theories of reality have been formulated in the history of post-Buddhistic thought in India Some have attained to rationalism, others to idealism within the philosophies such as the Nyāya Vaisheshikā and Samkhya-Yoga schools The last vestige of merely academic or scholastic asymmetry became progressively adjusted and rounded off Shunyavāda, Kshanikavijnanavāda and Mayavāda may be said to mark the successive stages of the perfection of this doctrine, but even in Mayavada vestiges of duality persist, as between *sat* and *asat* (authentic existence and non authentic existence)—as a reaction against the supposed nihilism in Buddhist doctrines Here in the Gita, however, we catch up once again with the spirit of the Upanishads, more ancient than all these schools of thought, where wisdom again attains its primal sublimity as a song

[17] *avināsi tu tad viddhi*
yena sarvam idam tatam
vinasam avyayasyā 'sya
na kaschit kartum arhati

Know That to be indestructible by which all this is pervaded None can bring about the destruction of This that knows no decrease

[18] *antavanta ime deha*
nityasyo 'ktah saririnah
anasino prameyasya
tasmad yudhyasva bharata

> These bodies (however) of the everlasting indestructible and underfinable embodied (One) are spoken of as having an end Therefore go on with the battle, O Bharata (Arjuna)

These two verses must be taken together Treated apart, they lend semblance of support to conflicting doctrines In fact many commentators have derived both unethical and non spiritual doctrines from expressions contained here and especially from the last words of verse 18, *tasmad yudhyasva bharata* (therefore fight, O Bharata)

Truisms and absurdities are equally derivable from the sense of these two verses put together To derive a consistent way of life from the words of the Gita requires its understanding in *unitive* terms where equivocation or quibbling becomes impossible We must try to enter into what the author Vyasa himself wants to say before hastily foisting our own favourite doctrines on disjunct sayings lifted from the total context.

There are two extremities or poles to be distinguished in these verses Verse 17 refers to an aspect of the human spirit corresponding to the *purusha* (spirit) of the samkhya which is altogether above *prakriti* (phenomena or nature) This cannot be touched by any activity of man At the other extreme there is the pole corresponding to *prakriti* which is recognized by samkhya and even by commonsense as *antavanta* (having an end) These two poles belong unitively to one and the same *atma* (Self)—as implied in the phrase *nityasya uktah* (said to be belonging to the eternal) Although not strictly in conformity with samkhya doctrines which retain their dual character yet in the light of more ancient Vedic tradition, with which the Gita wishes to maintain unbroken continuity, the expression *uktah* (said to be) is fully justified Monism is well known in the *Rig Veda* (e g 1 164 46 Him who is the One existent sages name variously)

The expression Therefore fight O Bharata' which seems to be an order given to Arjuna deserves our attention because it is perhaps the basis of the greatest amount of misunderstanding in connexion with the Gita. Some say the Gita wants

everybody to fight for their own interests, national, religious, etc. Others, like Sankara, though understanding it as permissive only, think that the advice is legitimate in the case of a *kshatriya* (warrior). That war takes a very imperative character when we take the particular instance of Arjuna as an individual caught in those necessary circumstances so carefully mentioned in great detail by Vyāsa in this and the previous chapter is clear. If, because of its imperative character as applied to the particular Arjuna, the converse generalization leading to justification of violence or war as a guiding principle for the regulation of human affairs could derive support from the Gita teaching remains very problematic indeed. It is often forgotten that the rare quality called true Kshatriyahood of the Gita mentioned in XVIII, 43 has to tally with its outer corresponding counterpart called a righteous war in II, 31, so that war in that rare and very occasionally remote contingency becomes the "open door to heaven" mentioned in II, 32. Without just war a Kshatriya could be a Don Quixote and the fight itself an absurd rioting by a plundering rabble.

The balance between the infinite One of verse 17 and the finite Many of verse 19 has to be struck in a manner in keeping with the perfect symmetry which is maintained here between the two verses. The first verse refers to the helplessness of man, and the second verse carries the same argument further to its simple and natural consequence. The necessary side of life has its own proper imperatives which are categorical. We are all caught in necessity and are obliged to act. Even Socrates had to go to the battlefield (*vide Symposium*, 219-220).

Arjuna is asked to fight so that he may not set in motion a sequence of disasters, major or minor, personal or impersonal. His own reputation, as we shall see, is involved. Krishna is interested, above all, that his friend is saved from personal regression or regret amounting to a moral or spiritual death as Arjuna

Note that only here (and in XI, 34 for other reasons) is this mandatory form of advice stated so clearly. Elsewhere it is watered down gradually into expressions such as "Stand up, O Bhārata!", "Conquer your enemy, called desire, O Bhārata!", "Therefore do not regret," etc. The mandatory form is fully justified here when we note that in conformity to the sāmkhya frame of reference the two poles of the spirit are kept here as strictly apart as possible within a truly Vedāntic context, retaining the fullest degree of ambivalence permissible.

The Rāmanuja school of dualism proves that these two aspects are admissible within a unitive notion of the Absolute The necessary and contingent aspects that belong to the central notion of the Absolute of this chapter, which begins by accentuating the duality implied, will be brought more unitively together in later chapters, and then the obligatory tone of the instruction to fight will be seen to be modified according to each chapter as indicated above The mandatory character is most apparent in this verse and in xviii, 59 In the central chapters there is no mandate form resorted to at all The mandate here is therefore due to the structure of the Gita as a whole

The third personal usage ('any one") employed at the end of verse 17 is correctly counterbalanced by the word "Bharata' which applies to the particular person "Arjuna" at the end of verse 18

The word *dehah* (bodies) of verse 18 also refers to the quantitative or numerical aspect as against *sarvam idam* (all this) of verse 17 "Bodies", therefore, are looked upon as necessary cannon fodder as is inevitable in one form or another in this world of transitory events Arjuna is only a cog in the wheel caught in the scheme of necessity and the sooner he realizes this, the better for him *This truth is repeated in* xviii, *61*. Unnecessary friction could thus be avoided Anyone therefore who construes this reference to fighting as an injunction as in a *smriti* (code of laws or conduct) will be mistaking its purpose which is only philosophical Any vestige or doubt on this score will be finally abolished when this reference is read with xviii, 63—'Having reflected, act as you like"

[19] *ya enam vetti hantaram*
yas chai 'nam manyate hatam
ubhau tau na vijanito
na yam hanti na hanyate

He who thinks This as the killer and he who thinks This as killed—both these know not. This does not kill, is not killed

This verse modifies the supposed mandate of verse 18 by stating that Arjuna is not killing at all when he is "asked" to kill there—thus heightening the paradoxical effect, with the object of resolving the ambivalence in more unitive terms.

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The word *ubhau* (both together) occurs again here, underlining the dialectical method of reasoning fully employed here Counterparts are brought more closely together, with all the reciprocal implications Finally the seal of unitive thinking is stamped on the whole argument in the last phrase 'This does not kill, is not killed bringing us normally to the wonder referred to in verse 29, for which the ground is being prepared

[20] *na jayate mriyate va kadachin*
na 'yam bhutva bhavita va na bhuyah
ajo nityah sasvato 'yam purano
na hanyate hanyamane sarire

This is neither born nor does This die, nor having once come into being cease to become any more Unborn, perpetual, eternal is This Ancient One It is not killed on the killing of the body

As indicated in the metre itself, the words here attain a new height of sublimity Except for one hidden phrase, the words do not require much explanation *Na 'yam bhutva bhavita va na bhuyah* (once considered existent, it does not be come again so) Reincarnation in the popular sense is seen to be ruled out Eternal life seems to be what is meant here The Self is never born and never dies It is pure being in itself, not subject to any process of evolution, flux or becoming

The epithets *ajah* (unborn) and *puranah* (ancient) cannot strictly be reconciled logically but such apparent contradic tions as we have said fit into the style of the Gita

[21] *veda vinasinam nityam*
ya enam ajam avyayam
katham sa purushah partha
kam ghatayati hanti kam

About him who knows This as the indestructible the ever lasting the unborn never decreasing one (of) such a person how could (the questions) whose death he causes , whom he kills (arise) O Partha (Arjuna)?

This verse finalizes the position of Arjuna as belonging to a context of wisdom rather than of action—so as to bring the

subject into conformity with the major part of the Gita, which is mainly a dialogue of philosophical import Krishna in effect tells Arjuna here that the question of killing does not obtrude into the situation at all Arjuna is considered as a contemplative and not as a warrior any more He has no longer any one sided agency in the matter of killing The full purpose or import of such a verse will become evident if we remember that the samkhya yoga of this chapter is more than plain samkhya which is revalued here The term *purusha* (spirit) is purposely employed here as implying the *purusha* (spirit) of samkhya philosophy unitively equated to a wise man

[22] *vasamsi jirnani yatha vihaya*
navani grihnati naro 'parani
tatha sarirani vihaya jirnany
anyani samyati navani dehi

As a man casting off his worn-out garments assumes others that are new, likewise casting off bodies that are worn-out, the embodied one takes to others that are new

Here we have a rather picturesque description often quoted in support of reincarnation The over simplicity of the picture is excusable only because of the necessity for rhapsodic singing as the Gita is primarily meant to be On closer examination we find that the popular view of reincarnation is not directly supported here—although semblance of such support may be found elsewhere to which we shall come in due course It is not spirit actively entering into matter, it is rather matter being put aside as it clings on to spirit by force of necessity again and again If we note the complimentary aspect of this theory of supposed reincarnation in xv, 8, we find it is not any individual soul but Ishvara (the Deity) that reincarnates Between the two-faced implications of these two verses (ii, 22 and xv, 8) the case for a veritable theory of reincarnation, spoken of usually as a doctrine of Hinduism, has only a very dubious support in the Gita There are other verses which seem to suggest and support the usual theory of reincarnation as popularly held such as iv, 5 where Krishna refers to his many past births Arjuna does not remember his many births but Krishna does The implications of such a difference

between Arjuna and Krishna are many. In fact the Gita, which speaks of an everlasting soul so graphically in this verse II, 22, seems to contradict itself very definitely in II, 27, where it says just the converse of the proposition, namely, "a person who is born is sure to die" etc. Between everlasting life and an intermittent existence there are different theories of reincarnation which have all to be studied individually and fitted into a general scheme to give a true and sufficiently respectable picture of reincarnation as it is to be understood in the proper sense of *brahmavidyā* (the science of the Absolute). Puerile theories must be abandoned so that we may treat this matter with the respect it deserves. To state the theory of reincarnation in very simple terms, as when a person speaks of a crow as his grandfather, would be to detract from the theory as a very legitimate way of explaining inequality among created beings. Childish theories of reincarnation, much in vogue, are repugnant to the Gita. We do not deny, however, that a pure picture of how matter and spirit get inter-related more or less as implied in the *Enneads* of Plotinus, are still tenable.

[23] *nai 'nam chhindanti sastrāni*
nai 'nam dahati pāvakah
na chai 'nam kledayanty āpo
na soshayati mārutah

Weapons do not cut This, fire does not burn This and water does not wet This; wind does not dry This:

[24] *achchhedyo 'yam adāhyo 'yam*
akledyo 'soshya eva cha
nityah sarvagatah sthānur
achalo 'yam sanātanah

Indeed It is uncleavable; It is non-inflammable; It is unwettable and non-dryable also; everlasting, all-pervading, stable, immobile; It is eternal.

[25] *avyakto 'yam achintyo 'yam*
avikāryo 'yam uchyate
tasmād evam viditvai 'nam
nā 'nusochitum arhasi

> Undefined is It, unthinkable is It, as non subject to change is It spoken of therefore, knowing It as such, there is no reason for you to feel sorry for It

Lest any materialistic or dualistic notion should still persist in regard to the Self as envisaged here, these verses are meant to give to it a purer status in keeping with the unitive Self as the Absolute

The self transcends materiality or the elements (verse 23), becomes eternal (verse 24), and even beyond thought (verse 25)—attaining the reality of pure absolutism as in the Upanishads such as the *Mandukya* (verse 7) where the Self is equated with the *chaturtha* or *turiya* (the fourth) state A dialectical revaluation of samkhya duality can be seen to run through these verses that bring immanent and transcendent together.

With verse 25 the attention of Krishna begins to be given to the immediate problem of Arjuna's grief, which Krishna wants to counteract The apparent change of subject and style of argument in the verses that follow, dropping down from the sublime to the ordinary, is quite consistent with the uniform style adopted in the Gita of referring to contingent and necessary, transcendent and immanent aspects of reality side by side The key to understand the unity of Krishna's reasoning from verse 25 onwards up to verse 38 (which forms one natural section) is the phrase " there is no reason for you to feel regret " which is many times repeated Samkhya style of reasoning finds its natural counterpart in down to earth commonsense which is therefore not out of place here when Krishna has to deal with the actualities of the situation

[26] *atha chai 'nam nityajatam*
nityam va manyase mritam
tatha 'pi tvam mahabaho
nai 'nam sochitum arhasi

> Or again if you should hold This to be constantly-ever-born or as constantly ever-dying, even then O Mighty-Armed (Arjuna) you have no reason to regret it

Here there is a climbing down by way of concession to Arjuna's possible incapacity to understand the argument in all its absolutist implications Krishna adopts an alternative

next-best line of argument which, however, still conforms to the methodology proper to yoga, though conceding more to the dualism of samkhya Though doctrinally accepting samkhya duality for the sake of argument, the method employed conforms to the strict requirements of yogic dialectics Herein consists the dialectical revaluation of the Gita to which we have referred Note that the principle of continuity is maintained by the usage of the word *nitya* (eternal) to the Self Birth and death are treated as twin aspects that naturally neutralize themselves in the context of the eternal Arjuna is thus left unaffected by both equally

Note the reversion to the second person as against the third person employed in verse 17 This is because in verse 17 a model rational contemplative was under reference while in verse 26 here it is Arjuna as a historical personage who is discussed.

[27] *jatasya hi dhruvo mrityur*
dhruvam janma mritasya
tasmad apariharye 'rthe
na tvam sochitum arhasi

In respect of anyone born, death is certain, and certain is birth likewise for anyone dead, therefore regarding something inevitable, you have no reason to feel any regret.

That the same double-sided method of reasoning is valid even in the domain of sheer necessity, is brought out in this verse Death and life are the two counterparts here which, when unitively understood, should leave Arjuna in the same position as a contemplative But textually examined, this verse seems to contradict all that has been stated in verses 20 ff earlier, regarding the eternal nature of the Self However, considering the supposition on which the arguments here are advanced, this contradiction is only apparent and should be treated together with the previous verse where there is a saving phrase *atha cha* (now also, if) The difference between the Self of verse 20 and that implied here is not unlike the two theories of relativity (general and particular) employed by modern writers This particular reference is meant to be fitted without contradiction into the general theory developed earlier In both cases it is the methodology of yoga that is the common factor

[28] *avyaktadini bhutani*
vyaktamadhyani bharata
avyaktanidhanany eva
tatra ka paridevanā

Beings have an unmanifested origin and manifested middle states, O Bharata (Arjuna), and again unmanifested terminations Where is room for plaint herein?

A slight deflection from the pure position of *ajatavada* (doctrine of non creation) is again, for purposes of argument, admitted here Manifestation or the middle stage referred to here, lends tentative reality to what is otherwise treated as mere appearance and *maya* in Vedanta This is a concession made to reason as employed by an intelligent man, which is in keeping with the spirit and scope of this chapter The *vyakta* (manifest) of the samkhya philosophy proper is not so symmetrically bounded on either side by the *avyakta* (unmanifest) as herein postulated The head and tail ends of the Samkhya scheme of reality are represented by *purusha* (pure spirit) and *mulaprakriti* (root nature which is synonymous with *avyakta*, the unmanifest) respectively In the event of death or dissolution the three stages of beginning, middle and end, merge without differentiation into the new notion of the *avyakta* (unmanifest) in the unitive Absolute envisaged here, which is a numinous factor whose wonder is referred to in the next verse

[29] *ascharyavat pasyati kaschid enam*
ascharyavad vadati tathai 'va cha 'nyah
ascharyavach chai 'nam anyah srinoti
srutva py enam veda na chai 'va kaschit

A certain person sees This as a wonder, likewise another speaks about This as a wonder Another hears of It even as a wonder, but even hearing no one understands This at all

Here the Gita rises once more to the sublimity of a mystical song, before descending soon after to the commonplace, like the flute of a Krishna producing different notes in succession, but having always the lulling effect of the same music

of yoga Krishna himself is called Yoga Isvara (Lord of Yoga) at the end of the whole work

"Sees", "speaks" and "hears" are three ways of appraising the Absolute—and yet, in spite of each, the Absolute remains a wonder eluding the seeker and not to be understood in any fixed or static manner as a thing, entity or intellectual concept. It appears a rather sweeping statement to say that "nobody understands", but when we remember that the highest understanding of the Advaita (non dualistic doctrine) abolished the duality of subject and object altogether, this statement is perfectly in keeping with the final position of Vedanta.

[30] *dehi nityam avadhyo 'yam*
dehe sarvasya bharata
tasmat sarvani bhutani
na tvam sochitum arhasi

This embodied One within the bodies of all is ever immune to killing, O Bharata (Arjuna) Therefore in respect of any being you have no reason for regretting

This verse serves as a punctuation for the section that it brings to a close. The next section extends to verse 39

The reference to *sarvani bhutani* (all beings) lifts the discussion one degree higher than the purely human and historical context. Life values are referred to in the most general terms Regret in any relativist sense is ruled out finally whether it applies to individual life or even life in general

[31] *svadharmam api cha 'vekshya*
na vikampitum arhasi
dharmyad dhi yuddhach chhreyo 'nyat
kshatriyasya na vidyate

Further having regard also for the pattern of behaviour natural to you (*svadharma*) there is no reason for vacillation, for there could be nothing more meritorious than a war that is right for a true fighter (*kshatriya*)

Matters relating to the personal life of Arjuna are dealt with by his friend Krishna by way of consoling him Even this

new section bears a direct relation to the rest of the theoretical discussion of this chapter inasmuch as the values implied, whether spiritual, ethical or merely those of personal honour, are all directly derivable from the main doctrine of the Absolute

Honour, the loss of which is equated to death in verse 34, taken in its usual light, outside the context of absolutism, would seem to lend support to such absurdities as when a student commits suicide when he fails in an examination Honour as a value in the absolutist context is equal to dishonour seen in the same context, and these are meant to cancel each other out, leaving the contemplative again on the neutral ground which belongs to the Absolute When honour is equated thus with dishonour and dishonour with death as in verse 34 below, there is no violation of the principles of an absolutist way of life that the Gita consistently upholds

The much talked-about doctrine of *svadharma* (conduct proper to oneself), which is considered by many as one of the principal doctrinal contributions of the Gita, is referred to for the first time here Favourite sociological doctrines of religious-minded people have seemingly derived support from this idea Reserving a fuller discussion of *svadharma* in relation to what is called *varnāshramadharma* (familiarly known as the caste system) when we come to the latter in IV, 13, IX, 32 and XVIII, 41, ff of the Gita, for our present purposes it is sufficient for us to say that the reference here is to the position of Arjuna consistent with his past upbringing and present position as an actual fighter on the side of the Pandavas *Svadharma* as a general doctrine is to be distinguished from its particular application to Arjuna in the given situation As a general principle it is not far different from what is known in the *Nichomachean Ethics* of Aristotle where specificity itself is the basis of virtue If a tree bears fruit that is proper to its species it is fulfilling its *svadharma*, or unfolding its innate character The virtue of a good cow may be said to be the quality and quantity of its milk. Similarly saltiness is proper to salt. Man's humanity distinguishes the human kind and conforming to human nature is the basis of virtue or *svadharma* for man Socrates as an Athenian was fulfilling his *svadharma* when he took up arms for his city MacArthur when he bombed Koreans was fulfilling his *svadharma* in his own particular context If he had refused he would have been just replaced

Here the *svadharma* of an Arjuna who is referred to as a *kshatriya* (warrior) is a parallel case When we see that Drona is a brahmin archer whose *svadharma* is not in the battlefield, and even Bhishma is primarily a patriarch rather than a combatant, the reference to *kshatriya* conduct here has to be taken with the latitude that we see is being permitted for the situation

It is not to a watertight class called *kshatriyas* that reference is made here, but to a warrior type of personality to which Arjuna as an individual happens to conform Moreover Arjuna is not within the Aryan fold, strictly speaking He was related to the dark skinned Krishna who was a king of the Vrishnis, some forgotten and probably heterodox section found south of the Vindhya mountains There is no indication elsewhere of the Aryan origin of the Pandavas ethnologically. The kshatriya hood here referred to must therefore pertain merely to a psycho physical type and not to a caste as people easily tend to understand it

We have also the glaring case of Krishna himself who is not in his *svadharma* (conduct proper to oneself) as a charioteer He is a Guru, a teacher of philosophy who follows another vocation, not his own, for the time being

A man is true to his *svadharma* when he does not wilfully and abruptly break away from his own previous nature and nurture Such breaking away in the case of Arjuna would be if he suddenly desired to become a mendicant or a *samnyasin* (renouncer) as hinted at by himself

Api cha (also and) occurs again here This indicates that the argument is something extra added on to the main argument, which does not concern itself with *svadharma* at all Such reference is therefore incidental, being merely meant to console Arjuna

The word *vikampitum*, usually interpreted 'to tremble", may be taken to mean more simply 'not to swerve"—from the path chalked out for Arjuna by natural circumstances

Note in the second line that the *svadharma* of Arjuna as a *kshatriya* has to tally with the legitimate or righteous character of the war he is asked to wage, if it is to be conducive to spiritual progress

Shreyas (better) Any warfare is not to be waged by a *kshatriya* to promote spiritual progress Conversely, even a righteous war has to be waged only by a genuine *kshatriya* to produce right results The reciprocal factors thus coinciding correctly

would alone produce a desirable spiritual effect This is almost like Cartesian occasionalism in view of the thin probability involved here The chance element (*jadrichchhaya*) mentioned in the next verse refers to this very condition To derive mechanically the dictum that if a *kshatriya* should simply fight he would gain merit is an absurd notion, although very commonly held

> [32] *yadrichchhaya cho 'papannam*
> *svargadvaram apavritam*
> *sukhinah kshatriyah partha*
> *labhante yuddham idrisam*
>
> True warriors (*kshatriyas*) have reason to be happy too O Partha (Arjuna) to have the chance of such a war presenting itself unsought before them as an open door to heaven

The idea here is complementary to that of the previous verse The door of heaven opens before the warrior who is a true *kshatriya* without any exertion or active seeking on his part This only underlines the element of occasionalism which alone favours spiritual progress

In the actual war that we know in this case in which Arjuna is involved, there is no absolutely clear line of righteousness discernible In fact it is not even a true war ' It is worse than even a civil war being a family feud To speak of right eous warfare here could have but one meaning, that it is a war where absolutist spiritual values are involved We may suppose that it is righteous because Arjuna and Krishna are interested in absolutism while Drona and Bhishma who are the best of the Kurus represent only one form or another of relativist spirituality This is what makes this particular war fare so rare and happy according to Krishna in this verse Arjuna does not go to heaven though there is reference to the gate of heaven open for him He was not admitted into a relativistic heaven though Duryodhana was as we read at the end of the *Maha Bharata* story Arjuna must have attained to something higher in keeping with the value he represented in the war

> [33] *atha chet tvam imam dharmyam*
> *samgramam na karishyasi*

tatah svadharmam kirtim cha
hitva papam avāpsyasi

If, on the other hand, you will not take to this battle which conforms to the requirements of righteousness, then thwarting what is consistent with your own nature and your good repute you will become involved in evil

There is reference on the part of Krishna to *pāpa* (sin). This was exactly what Arjuna feared (I, 45) and for which he was decried by Krishna In the mouth of Krishna himself now what exact connotation should be given to this word sin? This question becomes more difficult to answer when we see that later on, the teaching of the Gita is for transcending both sin and virtue, both bad and good, as we find even as early as verse 50 in this same chapter

The sin referred to here must therefore be to the form of regret or negative state of diffidence from which Arjuna himself suffered a moment ago It is clear at least that sin here does not allude to any cardinal aspect of the Gita teaching. Disqualification for full *moksha* (liberation) and lapsing into *samsara* (relativistic life) are referred to often as the worst disaster, rather than sin, which is a vague term used by religious people only Krishna uses Arjuna's expression as Arjuna himself might use it, for the sake of clarity.

The nature of the sin is suggested in that Arjuna would contradict his own nature and spoil his reputation, thus lapsing into regret which describes the state of mind of a sinner.

The word *dharmyam* (what accords with one's true nature) is again stressed for reasons already indicated In other words the war must be willed by God if it is to be fought so as to be free from sin Omission of such a war is the sin here as it defeats the will of God, to put it in the usual language of Christian theology In this *rare* case, not-killing becomes sin, rather than killing, which latter all religions hold to be sinful. It is a special kind of sin of omission and not of commission. The religious notion of sin is not refuted here It remains intact in its own proper context (x, 5) It is not the subject of discussion here at all The "kill not" of the Jewish commandments of Christianity and Buddhism, do not suffer therefore by any teaching of the Gita Gandhian *ahimsa* (non-hurting) belonging to Jainism would have remained

equally intact, if he had not sought support to explain it in the light of an arbitrary understanding of the teaching of the Gita (*e g* Thus the author of the Gita by extending meaning of words has taught us to imitate him Let it be granted that according to the letter of the Gita it is possible to say that warfare is consistent with renunciation of fruit But after forty years unremitting endeavour fully to enforce the teaching of the Gita in my own life I have in all humility, felt that perfect renunciation is impossible without perfect observance of *ahimsa* in every shape and form p 130 *The Gita According to Gandhi* by Mahadev Desai, Ahmedabad, 1946)

[34] *akirtim cha pi bhutani*
kathayishyanti te vyayam
sambhavitasya cha kirtir
maranad atirichyate

Living beings will also pronounce a never ending verdict of calumny on you and to one used to honour dishonour is worse than death

[35] *bhayad ranad uparatam*
mamsyante tvam maharathah
yesham cha tvam bahumato
bhutva yasyasi laghavam

The great car generals will look upon you as quitting the battle from fear and having been honourably looked upon by them you will be held in derision

[36] *avachyavadams cha bahun*
vadishyanti tava h tah
nindantas tava samarthyam
tato duhkhataram nu kim

Those against you will speak of you in unspeakable terms scorning your ability what pain could there be keener than this?

In these three verses there is reference to very common place values not generally alluded to as religious or even spiritual In verse 34 honour is the value involved How

honour is precious to a warrior on the battlefield is easily understandable and has already been touched upon in the previous verse The samkhya philosophers were heterodox rationalists who were not specially religious In this chapter where such a school of samkhya is under reference, the personal values such as honour, ill repute and shame, to which Arjuna is likely to be exposed by backing out of the battlefield at the eleventh hour, are just those legitimate and normal values in whose name he could be appealed to It is true that in other chapters we find the Gita clearly teaching a neutral indifference to reputation, shame or public opinion (xii, 19, xiv, 24, 25 etc) The place given to shame, reputation and honour in the three separate verses so prominently here is to be understood as normal to a complete enumeration of personal values that legitimately belong to the rationalist realism of the samkhya school Rationalism itself is a form of agnostic attitude where 'here and now' aspects of life are given a large place Further, the dishonour or disrepute mentioned in verse 34 comes from the whole world of created beings, as implied in the expression *bhutani* (creatures) Life itself philosophically understood in the context of rationalism, is a constant going forward, a forward flowing flux or becoming The 'sin' of verse 33 implies as we have said, a regression or set back in this forward flow of life The vital energy in all creatures may be said to make life always play a forward game Sulkiness, when one is in the thick of a game or a battle, amounts to a deliberate act of obstruction of the normal forward flow of events Any backing out of the situation in which Arjuna found himself would amount to a violence towards life itself understood in negative philosophical terms as with the samkhyas Negation has therefore no place in the scheme of values of a rationalist as understood within the scope of this chapter As a real soldier on the battlefield Arjuna is here called upon to recognize the need for safeguarding his own personal reputation Soon however, the tone changes even in this section of the chapter, as we see in verse 38 below, just before the chapter passes on to the orthodox pragmatic form of yoga after verse 39

[37] *hato va prapsyasi svargam*
jitva va bhokshyase mahim
tasmad uttishtha kaunteya
yuddhaya kritanischayah

Dying you will attain heaven or winning you will have the enjoyment of the earth Therefore arise, O Kaunteya (Arjuna) making up your mind to fight

[38] *sukhadukhe same kritva*
labhalabhau jayajayau
tato yuddhaya yujyasva
nai vam papam avapsyasi

Equalizing both pleasure and pain both gain and loss both victory and defeat, *enter wholly into* battle Thus you will avoid sin

These two verses are intended to round off the samkhya position as revalued in the Gita before switching over to *buddhi yoga* (dialectics of pure reason) The dialectical method is again used In verse 37 note that the gain is double When Arjuna s reason was clouded by his emotions he tried to apply the same dialectical method in II 5 where he imagined two disasters falling on himself Here the same dialectics properly applied result in gain both here and hereafter When applied to values that were of earth we had a doubly negative conclusion Here heaven is introduced and doubly positive values emerge

In the light of the fact that Arjuna did not desire heaven at all nor even earthly joys these words of Krishna should be taken as giving an example of how to apply dialectical reason correctly to a given situation *and consciously to set it off* against the negative dialectics of Arjuna which is based on wrong values Krishna is just teaching him a method and not asking him to desire heaven or worldly gains It would be inconsistent to think that Krishna would teach Arjuna to desire a relativistic heaven when Arjuna s own position has been stated in II 8 quite emphatically in a manner more in keeping with the superior doctrine of the Gita For a Guru to be inferior in outlook to the disciple on such a subject would be totally untenable even on the basis of any *adhikari bheda* (differences in the rights of persons to claim higher knowledge) sometimes advanced Such an interpretation would be repugnant to the structure of the Upanishads on which the Gita itself relies

The verse terminates with the milder admonition to stand up with a firm conviction rather than to fight

by sheer necessity, as in II, 18 The keenness of actual necessity gives place to the need for an intellectual resolve It is the need for spiritual reorientation which emerges to the forefront

In verse 38 an example is given where dialectics is employed quite properly, rid of the dualism still adhering to the samkhya way of reasoning The counterparts are brought closer together We find a central place given to the avoidance of *papa* (sin) or evil, which obscured Arjuna s mind much in I, 45 Everything is set and ready for *buddhi yoga* (dialectics of pure reason) to be discussed

The word *same* (equal) alludes to the chief prerequisite of yoga, as stated in verse 48 of this same chapter

[39] *esha te 'bhihita samkhye*
buddhir yoge tv imam srinu
buddhya yukto yaya partha
karmabandham prahasyasi

> What has just been taught is reason according to samkhya but hear now of the same according to yoga attaining to the unity of which reasoning you will be able to throw off the bondage of works

That there are two sections in this chapter and that there is a certain relation between them we have already mentioned The line of demarcation between the two sections is most explicitly mentioned here beyond any question of doubt There is a *buddhi* or reasoning which has been discussed so far It conforms to the model or pattern of the samkhya philosophy and there is another *buddhi* which employs a method and follows a line of thought in keeping with a more orthodox tradition The last verse of this chapter distinguishes the second way or state of thought by the word *brahmi* (pertaining to the Absolute) The notion of *brahman* (the Absolute) has its affiliations to the Vedas Hence it is that we have called the second way as conforming to a more orthodox tradition

It has been generally admitted on the part of scholars (*e g* Edgerton and Radhakrishnan) that the samkhya here is not the same as the samkhya system known to us from Kapila s time The yoga of the latter half of this chapter does not conform either to the pattern of Patanjali s yoga system.

In trying to bring out the unity of structure of the whole chapter Radhakrishnan suggests there is an adaptation here to 'Gita theism (p 115, *The Bhagavad Gita*, 1948)

In this chapter at least there is nothing which could be taken to be even approaching theism The word *Ishvara* or Lord does not occur in this chapter Elsewhere, however, the word does occur We should particularly note that in XVIII 61, Krishna does not refer to himself as an Ishvara but refers to an Ishvara in the third person, as if outside himself—Krishna being the absolute and not a deity in the theistic sense Then, in IV, 6, Krishna, it is true, does refer to himself as Ishvara but here it is among other more or less important roles that lordship is mentioned incidentally as the word *api* (also) indicates In XV, 8, Ishvara is used as synonymous with the reincarnating Self and in XV 17, Ishvara is unmistakably identified once again with the Absolute The word Ishvara should not mislead us into any idea of theism at all *Ishatva* (lordliness) is one of the *siddhis* (powers) of a yogi according to Patanjali and in these last two references, Ishvara means human attributes akin to leadership Therefore the meaning of Ishvara as used in the Gita will be seen to range between the idea of the Absolute and the mere attribute of a leader The static notion of a theistic god like Vishnu is repugnant to the spirit in which the whole Gita has been conceived Dr Lacombe points out Vishnu also as in Vedic texts, passes from a subordinate rank to a supreme rank His identification with Narayana and with Vasudeva took place at epic periods posterior to the composition of the Gita (translated—p 26 *L Absolu Selon le Vedanta*, Paris 1937)

It is clear from XV 19 that a theistic approach to reality is ruled out altogether Krishna represents there the *Purushottama* (the Highest of the High) which concept is different from that of an Ishvara or Lord since Purushottama stands for the pure Absolute Krishna is against himself being looked upon as having a human form as seen in IX 11 Any semblance of support for the theism referred to by Radhakrishnan must be derived if at all from chapter XII where in verse 5 the Gita recommends the path of the manifested as being *easier* than the pursuit of the unmanifested but in the very same chapter amends are made for this preference on the score of *easiness* only, by a concluding verse specially intended for the purpose of straightening any wrong impression on this matter We shall

give this closer scrutiny in its proper place, but in the expression *dharmyāmritam* (righteous and everlasting value) the value implied is far from suggesting any theism. If some scholars still think that the Gita is a religious book belonging to a particular form of theism, the only other semblance of support, perhaps, is chapter XI, where the *Vishvarūpa Darshana* (Vision of the Cosmic Form) is wrongly treated as a theophany, or manifestation of God. Many western critics, like Prof. R. Otto of Marburg, have fallen into this error, which is not strange. But for Indians like Radhakrishnan to make this mistake is perhaps too much to leave unnoticed. *Brahmavidyā* (the science of the Absolute) should not be confused with mere religious theism, and the distinction between the nature of the *Vishvarūpa* (cosmic form) and a merely religious worship of Vishnu should be patent to anyone who scrutinizes XI, 48. Arjuna himself, not capable of being an absolutist in the full sense intended in the Gita, pleads for a *lesser* vision in XI, 46, which perhaps might conform to theism, *but Krishna did not grant that prayer.* Instead he just revealed his ordinary form as stated in XI, 50. He refused to reveal himself as any theistic or conventional God of any religious group.

In the concluding part of the Gita (XVIII, 66) the final point to this view that the Gita has no religious message at all, is found in the words *sarvadharmān parityajya* (abandoning all religious duties). The Gita is a philosophical work and treats of *Brahmavidyā* which has nothing to do with theism or religion as such.

The second half of chapter II has been characterized in II, 72 as pertaining to *brāhmī sthitih* (the state of the Absolute).

The unity of the two sections in this chapter can be understood when we consider them (1) as sāmkhya revalued in the first half of the chapter and (2) the more rational tradition of the orthodox schools of thought which prevailed prior to the Gita, as also similarly revalued in the second half of the chapter. What gives further unity and justifies the general title of Sāmkhya-Yoga (Unitive Reasoning) as applied to both the sections together, is that both represent revaluations of rationalism (heterodox and orthodox) dialectically, *i.e.*, according to a methodology particular to yoga, as we shall see from the definitions and instances of yoga given in the verses to follow. No doubt is left about sāmkhya and yoga being the same, by V, 4-5, so that the title of this chapter could cover both even in advance already and justify the

synthetic way of referring to the two aspects of this chapter together as one ' Samkhya-Yoga "

In this particular verse the terms '*buddhi* (reason) according to samkhya ' and ' *buddhi* (reason) according to yoga " are referred to The latter is really none other than *buddhi yoga* (dialectics of pure reason) *Buddhi* (reason) is a human value cable of being discussed (1) under heterodox rationalism known to the samkhya school revalued as a yoga and (2) under orthodox Vedism to which rationalistic norms could be applied to conform again to the requirements of a yoga Verse ii, 39 demarcates the two sections inclusively named Samkhya Yoga as having to do with the Absolute

Karmabandham (bondage of works) is an evil, one degree milder than *papa* (sin) of the previous verse The remedy for this bondage suggested here is to be yoked to *buddhi* (pure reason)—thus to be yoked to *buddhi* " is an interchangeable term with *buddhi yoga*

The demarcation line between the two sections becomes very clear by the placing of the word *tu* (well, now then!)

[40] *ne 'ha bhikramanaso 'sti*
pratyavayo na vidyate
svalpam apy asya dharmasya
trayate mahato bhayat

In such (a path) there is no forfeiture of any merit nor is there involved any demerit by transgression Even a little of such a way of life saves one from great apprehension

This verse begins the section which is described at the very end of this chapter by the words *brahmi sthitih* (the state of spirit in accordance with the notion of the Absolute) The word *Brahman* we know already has its origin in the brah minical or Vedic context and thus refers back to the orthodox schools of Vedism as opposed to the heterodox rationalist schools of the previous half of this chapter Naturally, therefore this verse begins by contrasting *the merely orthodox* Vedism with Brahmavidya (the science of the Absolute) as intended in the Gita

Relativistic Veda is here *contrasted with absolutist Vedanta* The progressive accumulation of merit or regression into demerit, are both irrelevant to spirituality as it should be

understood in Vedanta Although Vedanta has no *dharma* so called, or as absolutism is beyond all *dharmas* (which imply actions of the relativist world), here we find the reference to *dharma* is merely for purposes of contrast with relativist duties which are full of injunctions and obligations It is usual in the same sense to speak sometimes of *upanishadsudharmah* (*dharma* as implied in the Upanishads) In the light of the final recommendation to abandon all *dharmas* (xviii, 66), the non-obligatory character of the *dharma* here becomes evident Relativist *dharma* is open to two dangers which are referred to here After building up merit, a slight deflection from or error of obligatory conduct could jeopardize the whole progress made, at any stage, at any given moment, not only nullifying all merit, but prospectively and adversely affecting generations still unborn, in the family of the defaulter

These two dangers are referred to in the terms *abhikrama-nasah* (destruction of what is gradually built up) and *pratyavaya* (negation of what should have accrued)

By contrast, absolutist wisdom is safe sailing, as we shall see from the quotation below from the *Mundaka Upanishad* All upanishads invariably begin their teaching of absolutist wisdom by first referring to Vedic or relativist wisdom often in seemingly laudatory terms, but soon to damn it with faint praise, pointing out its dangers This is a favourite device in Samskrit and is known as *virodhabhasa*

The fear referred to here should also be understood in the light of the danger in all relativist forms of spiritual progression which belong to the Vedic context

The words *svalpam api* (even a little) suggest those biblical sayings which also refer to wisdom, such as "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," "the still small voice,' and "the pearl of great price," etc

The nature of the *pratyavaya* (negation of what should have accrued) referred to becomes clear from the following quotation from the *Mundaka Upanishad* (i 2 3)

If one s *Agnihotra* (Vedic burnt offering) sacrifice is not followed by the sacrifice of the new moon and of the full moon, by the four months sacrifice, by the harvest sacrifice, if it is unattended by guests, or not offered at all, or without the ceremony to all the gods, or not according to rule, it destroys his seven worlds

[41] *vyavasāyātmika buddhir*
eke 'ha kurunandana
bahusākhā hy anantās cha
buddhayo 'vyavasayinam

Here, O Prize of the Kurus (Arjuna), the well-founded reasoning is unitive but many branched and endless are the reasonings of them in whom reason is ill-founded

The basic requirements for *buddhi* (reasoning) to function in a manner conducive to attain spiritual values is here referred to as being unitive or uniate. Unitive thinking alone is the proper instrument of contemplation It follows certain *vyavasthās* or rules of arrangement which properly belong to its method of achieving worthwhile values in life treated as a whole One has to desire spiritual values wholeheartedly according to certain attitudes proper to the context of wisdom. Such unitive well-founded reasoning is here referred to as *vyavasāyātmika buddhi* (a reason well-founded and regulated and directed to its object) Such a reasoning establishes a direct bi-polar relationship with the object of its search. It does not get lost in endless ramifications Bi-polarity, once established, is conducive to further reasoning along the same lines, culminating in the highest good, in the Self This, we shall see, is the basic doctrine of the Gita This bi-polar method which consists of resolving duality implicit in it at every stage is none other than the method of yoga, as employed throughout the Gita

Dialectics when understood properly in Western philosophy would come nearest to this method of yoga In the Introduction and elsewhere, wherever the subject arises, further clarification of dialectics will be found

[42] *yam imām pushpitam vācham*
pravadanty avipaschitah
vedavādaratāh pārtha
nā 'nyad asti 'ti vadinah

[43] *kamātmānah svargaparā*
janma karma phala pradam
kriya visesha bahulām
bhogaisvaryagatim prati

[44] *bhogaisvarya prasaktanam*
taya pahritachetasam
vyavasayatmika buddhih
samadhau na vidhiyate

Such flowery speech as uttered by the foolish adhering to the doctrine of the Veda negating any other (transcendental) verity, the self of which is nothing but desire made, holding heaven for highest goal, offering only birth as the result of works abounding in many special observances which aim at enjoyment and domination

in the case of those whose minds are under the sway of such teachings who are attached to enjoyment and domination, a well founded reason does not come under the sway of the peace of contemplation (*samadhi*)

[45] *traigunya vishaya veda*
nistraigunyo bhava rjuna
nirdvandio nitya sattvastho
niryogakshema atmavan

The Veda treats of matters related to the three *gunas* (modalities of nature), you should be free from these three modalities O Arjuna, free from (relative) pairs of opposites established ever in pure being, without any yoga (discipline) or well being (as dual factors but remain) one (unitively) Self possessed (*atmavan*)

[46] *yavan artha udapane*
sarvatah samplutodake
tavan sarveshu vedeshu
brahmanasya vijanatah

There would be as much use for all the Vedas to a Brahmin of wisdom as there could be for a pool of water when a full flood prevails all over

These verses must be taken together They unequivocally continue a tirade against Vedism The relativism of Vedic spirituality is here condemned as being non conducive to the

turning of the mind to *samadhi* (final peace emancipation, the highest goal)

The method of reasoning that Vedic minded people employ is also here discredited in unmistakable terms It is usual however, on the part of apologists in the name of Hindu orthodoxy to condone or take away the edge from this forthright condemnation Here in verse 46 the Vedas are referred to as a useless old well Condemnation of this kind is further repeated elsewhere in the Gita The tree that the Veda knower knows is to be ruthlessly cut down in xv 1 3

Radhakrishnan for example as one such apologist refers to the Vedic ritualists as of this verse or Vedic Aryans as he calls them as glorious children the youth of humanity whose l fe was still fresh and sweet yet who had also the balanced wisdom of maturity (*The Bhagavad Gita* p 117) He does not say however that they were mistaken according to the Gita

In their eagerness to save the Vedas in the name of orthodoxy such writers forget that to the extent that relativism is connived at the true cause of Vedanta which is perhaps a superior heritage for all mankind suffers by such apologetics The *rishis* (seers or sages) stood for absolutist wisdom first and foremost while giving to relativist knowledge all possible credit due to it For anyone to try to out do the *rishis* themselves in the name of any Hindu apologetics whatsoever with which certain elements of patriotism and nationalism are also likely to be mixed would be indirectly a disservice to that very heritage which Paul Deussen describes as the fairest flower on the tree of Indian wisdom

In verse 42 the word *vedavadaratah* (those attached to Vedic reasoning) is often apologetically translated as referring only to *karma kanda* (ritualistic section) of the Vedas although it plainly refers here to those who are attached to an argument which is one-legged or wh ch is a form of reasoning that is non d alectical and peculiar to the Vedas and not to the Vedanta

That such a meaning as we give is intended is clear from the next qualifying phrase in the same verse—*na anyad asti iti vadinah* (those who contend there is no second side to a given argument) Vedantic thought conforms to a pattern of reasoning which has t o counterparts which is exactly what is known from early Greek times in the West as dialectical

[44] *bhogaisvarya prasaktanam*
taya pahritachetasam
vyavasayatmika buddhih
samadhau na vidhiyate

Such flowery speech as uttered by the foolish adhering to the doctrine of the Veda negating any other (transcendental) verity, the self of which is nothing but desire made, holding heaven for highest goal, offering only birth as the result of works abounding in many special observances which aim at enjoyment and domination
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That such a meaning as we give is intended is clear from the next qualifying phrase in the same verse—*na anyad asti iti vadinah* (those who contend there is no second side to a given argument) Vedantic thought conforms to a pattern of reasoning which has two counterparts, which is exactly what is known from early Greek times in the West as dialectical

reasoning That yoga is essentially the same as dialectical reasoning the succeeding verses will soon reveal

In verse 43 the word *svargaparah* (those for whom heaven is the supreme value) would seem at first sight to contradict what was just said in verse 42 where the ritualists are represented as thinking with undue emphasis on one side of life *Svarga* (heaven) brought in here might seem to compensate for this one sidedness, but in reality the heaven of the ritualist is only a form of an "earthly paradise" where the same pleasures that are understood on earth could be prolonged Indra, for example, is steeped in such pleasures Such a heaven, non dialectically conceived, is repugnant to the teaching of the Gita, although this does not mean that higher human values properly understood are excluded This will be clear from III, 11, where there is a reference to a pro perly contemplative give and take between man and gods as reciprocal counterparts of the same situation as revised in Vedanta

The phrase *janma karma phala pradam* (yielding fruits of action through births) can refer to superior or inferior rela tivist values, but both the result and the action are conceived as lying within the relativistic scheme Further the "fruit" here is a *third* factor incompatible with either ends or means Herein lies the absurdity of the Vedic way, confusing the mind of the seeker because of the triangular situation involved Bi polarity of interest, which is a pre requisite for yogic reasoning, is thus violated Hence the ritualistic injunctions become endlessly complicated and entangled This is what is suggested in the next phrase *kriya visesha bahulam* (abounding in ritualistic specifications)

In verse 44, the phrase *taya apahrita chetasam* (faculties dominated by such factors), refers to what we have distinguished above as the third intrusive interest, lopsidedly conceived For *samadhi* (final peace) to result, it is essential that energies should not be dissipated in third interests which fall outside the scope of spirituality, for spiritual progress takes place only through a direct bi polar relationship

Of reasoning it is said here *na vidhiyate* (will not bend) Reasoning will not bend or submit to progressive sublimation in terms of higher and higher interests or values to the extent that the bi polarity is interfered with

In verse 45 the relativistic character of the Vedas is further elaborated The highest point of perfection envisaged according

to Vedic teaching is a *brahmin* of *sattvic* (pure) nature Arjuna is called upon to desire something better still which is to be got only by a thorough going absolutist

The categoric nature of the injunction to Arjuna to discard altogether the relativist standpoint is made quite clear in the phrase *nistraigunyo bhava rjuna* (transcend the three modalities of nature Arjuna) Just as crabbed age and youth cannot live together so with relativism and absolutism To think that *karma* (action) and *jnana* (wisdom) are recommended together here as some lukewarm apologists tend to think is exactly what Sankara calls the error of *jnana karma samuchchhaya* (commingling of wisdom and work) against which he has fought many a battle in various parts of his *bhashyas* (commentaries)

The revised attitude proper to the outlook of Vedanta is summed up in the second line of the same verse *nirdvandvah* (not based on pairs of opposites *e g* pleasure and pain) *nityasattvastho* (established in timeless or pure being) It is true *that the word sattva (referring to pure being) is common to* Vedic and Vedantic ways of life but the prefix *nitya* (timeless) lifts it out of the framework of relativism altogether It does not refer to the social quality holiness or purity of a ritualistic brahmin who is the highest product of the Vedic way To complete the meaning of what these remarks mean they should be read with reference to the brahmin in verse 46 Finally there is the phrase *niryogakshema* (without caring for end *e g* prosperity and happiness here as understood in the Vedic context) Further implications of *yoga* (something to be attained) and *kshema* (prosperity) as used here have to be derived from ch IV 11 and the connective verses The dualistic attitude as regards ends and means is here condemned [1]

In verse 46 the central value of the Vedas is compared to drinking water The *intelligent* brahmin values this in the form of its full flooded culmination as the Vedanta and has left off drinking at the Vedic well The non intelligent brahmin still persists in seeing value in what has been discarded and because of his relativistic static or closed form of spirituality which the intelligent have long since transcended is here held up for ridicule The absurdity of Vedic orthodoxy for its own sake is condemned The *reductio ad absurdum* argument

[1] *For further* discussion on ends and means see Chapter XVIII in *The Wo d of the Guru* by P Natarajan (Bangalore 1952)

evidently implicit in this verse, is watered down considerably in many translations, especially by those who are religious-minded

In the light of v, 18, we see further that the Gita attaches no superiority even to a learned and humble brahmin in the context of the wisdom of the Absolute (*brahmavidya*) which is its main concern, although some credit seems to be allowed for the spirituality of brahminhood in ix, 33 But on closer examination of that verse, we find that it is only simple human goodness and not any special holiness as such that is given a passing recognition The question is of loving Vedanta more and the Veda only as much as it deserves It is not that we should love the Vedas less but that we should love Vedanta more The Gita represents a full flooded revaluation of the closed static spirituality of the Vedas, in dynamic and open terms, to use the terminology of Bergson No total discredit of the Vedas is intended here, if it implies no denial of the absolutist way

[47] *karmany eva 'dhikaras te*
ma phaleshu kadachana
ma karma phala hetur bhur
ma te sango 'stv akarmani

Your concern should be with action (as such) alone, not for any benefits ever Do not become benefit-motivated, be not attached to inaction (either)

The idea of *karma* (action) is for the first time theoretically considered here and continuing up to verse 51, although it might be thought to belong more strictly to the next chapter on *Karma-Yoga* (Unitive Action), as this is supposed to be a chapter on samkhya The digression, however, is justified in the light of verse 49 (p 158) where *buddhi* (reason) is given primacy again over *karma* (action) Vedic ritualism implies so much of *karma* that it becomes unavoidable to refer to it here, particularly in this second half of chapter II The attempt is to revalue Vedism and bring it into line with a rationalism compatible with yoga Thus understood, the digression is normal

This is a much-quoted and much abused verse which has been bandied about by pseudo-pundits who seem to support the idea that a man who works should not think of any

results If a man should cultivate a field and if when the corn is ripe he himself should set fire to it to prove to his neighbours that he does not care for the fruit of action that would almost correspond to the sense in which many such pandits seem to interpret the meaning of the verse To expect reasonable results from any action that a man might do is but normal hence purposely to minimise the importance of results in the sense indicated in the above example would be absurd Aurobindo Ghose denounces what he calls the gospel of duty and renouncing the fruits of action which he says has become almost a *mahavakya* (great dictum) of the Gita by popular usage (pp 49 50 *Essays on Gita* 1st Series, 1926) There is a way in which *nishkama karma* (motiveless action) is to be understood and an aspect of the theory has already been discussed (see verse 45 under *niryogakshema*) The subtle implications of this doctrine will be better understood in the light of verses xviii 11 12

The fruit (*phala*) of action referred to here must mean not results that are desirable in the proper context of wisdom but only third or extraneous fruits or ends in the context where ends and means are treated dualistically When an artist paints for the joy of painting ends and means co ncide but in the case of a mercenary sold er ends and means do not coincide since he is thinking of his payment as a fruit and such an end is extraneous to the bi polar situation between victory and fighting which are the proper ends and means although to the degree that he treats his remuneration as incidental the duality may be min mised This is exactly what is being attempted to be expla ned here by the phrase *ma karma phala hetur bhur* (be not benefit motivated)

In the light of such an interpretation alone could the concluding phrase which is the converse of the proposition become fully relevant—*ma te sangah astu akarmani* (do not lapse into inactivity or ind fference i e owing to lack of interest in the end to be attained) Between taking action too seriously as m ght seem to be suggested in the opening phrase *karmany eva adhikaras te* and not be ng indifferent to it as suggested in the last phase a certain neutrality s to be maintained This neutrality as we shall see is d rectly connected with the state of mind of a yogi

The unitive or non dual treatment of ends and means is the subject matter of this verse and is often interpreted as encourag ng a callous attitude towards life when a man

merely says "I don't care for any good results" At best this could be called a form of hoboism

No reflection on the fitness of Arjuna to be the recipient of wisdom is implied here, as even Sankara's commentary would seem to suggest, qualified by his notions of *varna* (colour) as existing in the *vyavahārika* (actual) world in which he lived Sankara seems to suggest the inferiority of Arjuna to a brahmin to receive instruction in *Brahmavidyā* (science of the Absolute) If this attitude were justified we should have found Krishna refusing to teach Arjuna *Brahmavidyā* altogether The sentence here, however, is applicable equally to a brahmin or kshatriya, in fact it is more applicable to a brahmin as it is ritualism in the Vedic context that has just been discussed Dualism in the Vedic *karma* (action) of a brahmin is as reprehensible as dualism brought into a kshatriya's normal vocation Hence the imaginary words that Sankara puts in the mouth of Krishna as addressing Arjuna "You are qualified for works alone, not for the path of knowledge," (in his comment on this verse) fail to hit the mark altogether If Arjuna had been a *sudra* (worker) this reference by Sankara to caste *rights* would have been less absurd especially as heaven has been held out as a reward for Arjuna in ii, 32, and as Arjuna has been included among types who have divine qualities in xvi, 5

The word *adhikārah* is often translated as referring to *adhikara bhedā* (rights of castes for activities, according to law-makers) This is unwarranted in the light of what we have said It can just mean "concern" Here we have only an admonition on the part of Krishna asking Arjuna to avoid any consideration extraneous to the situation, or to avoid allowing any outside or third factor to interfere with his normal course of action Too much detachment is equally reprehended, not because of any caste rights involved, but only in the name of yoga which is to be understood in the light of the definition in the next verse

The word *eva* (alone) of the first line is meant to point to action for its own sake, as when we say "art for art's sake" to underline its idealistic nature It does not suggest the binding nature of action in the case of a kshatriya, as often too complacently believed

We see therefore that to press into service here the argument of the caste obligations of a kshatriya would be rather artificial and incompatible with the normal treatment of the

subject of a non-dual approach to ends and means in respect of action, whether of a brahmin or of a kshatriya This becomes all the more evident because Sankara, when explaining the meaning of "Do therefore fight, Arjuna" in his comment on II, 18, says "Here the duty of fighting is *not* enjoined"

[48] *yogasthah kuru karmani*
sangam tyaktvā dhanamjaya
siddhyasiddhyoh samo bhūtvā
samatvam yoga uchyate

> Engage in activity, O Dhanamjaya (Arjuna) taking your stand on the unitive way (of yoga) discarding attachments and capable of regarding both attainment and non-attainment as the same in sameness consists the unitive way (yoga)

Yoga here is for the first time given some precision of meaning, though in a preliminary and general way only. It is further defined in this chapter and, according to the requirements of context, in other chapters also The yoga of the Gita does not follow the conventional notions of yoga as found in the Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali This is clear from the over-all definition in VI, 23 ("disaffiliation from the context of suffering") Even the laboured steps or stages of yoga as popularly understood are prominent by omission here We have both sāmkhya and yoga revalued in this chapter

We should note further that nowhere is yoga defined merely as *chitta-vritti-nirodha* (inhibition of the fluctuations of the mind) which is the well-known definition of Patanjali in his *Yoga-Sutras* Patanjali's yoga has postures (*āsanas*) and breathing exercises, which are hardly touched upon in the Gita. We find a touch of sāmkhya dualism in this sister school of yoga, as understood in the *Shad-darshanas* or Six Systems of Indian philosophy

Such a dual treatment is what is revised and revalued in the Gita Hence the stress on the word *samatvam* (equality). The nature of equality intended here is indicated in the verse itself It is the same non-duality of ends and means which we have already discussed

The true yogi is equally unconcerned about *siddhyasiddha* (attainments and non-attainments), spiritual or otherwise. In other words both the propositions are equally foreign to

the neutralized yogi *Samadhi* (final peace) is not a distant goal to be reached by intermediate stages of attainment (*siddhi*) But any given stage of a true yogi is a neutral state where opposite tendencies are cancelled out It is in this sense that yoga is to be understood here Only such a notion of yoga would be in keeping with non duality as understood in *brahmavidya*

In this verse Arjuna is asked not to perform *karma* (action) in the usual way, like any other ordinary person, but to act with the neutral attitude of yoga firmly established in him

[49] *durena hy avaram karma*
buddhi yogad dhanamjaya
buddhau saranam anvichchha
kripanah phala hetavah

Far inferior is (the way of) action to the unitive way of reason, O Dhanamjaya (Arjuna), Resort to reason for final refuge, Pitiful are they who are benefit-motivated

[50] *Buddhi yukto jahati ha*
ubhe sukrita dushkrite
tasmad yogaya yujyasva
yogah karmasu kausalam

Affiliated to reason one leaves behind here both meritorious and unmeritorious deeds Therefore affiliate yourself to the unitive way (of yoga), Yoga is reason in action

These two verses together naturally follow up the difference between mere action and action as modified by yoga—which is a form of equalization of action with its counterpart which in this chapter is *buddhi* (reason) *Karma* (action) could have other counterparts in other chapters In a ritualistic context *karma* (action) could have *moksha* (final liberation) as its counterpart.

In verse 49 the importance of *buddhi* (reason) in rationalizing mere action is referred to Rationalized action is far superior, it says to mere action.

Although pure reason is the central value of this chapter, action, subjected to yogic revision, is also to be theoretically

distinguished before the proper discussion of *karma yoga* (unitive action) can be dealt with normally in the next chapter

A fresh definition of yoga is therefore given in verse 50 to complement the first definition in verse 48 The element of reason that could counterbalance and neutralize mere action is what makes for yoga in the context of action Hence the revised definition of *yogah karmasu kausalam* (yoga is the application of non mechanistic intuitive or even creative understanding into the domain of mere action)

Therefore not only is mere action, whether ritualistic or otherwise, far inferior to *buddhi yoga* (unitive reasoning) as stated in verse 49, but also inferior to action understood creatively according to verse 50

The *buddhi* (reasoning) referred to in verse 49 is one that is pure, not admitting of third or extraneous factors such as fruits of action as we have already explained under verse 47 The direct bi polar relation between *buddhi* (pure reason contemplative understanding) here with its object, should not be interfered with by other considerations, as when one is end-motivated The *karpanya dosha* (evil due to a negative state of spirit) of Arjuna in verse 7 is due to this interference of dualistic interests, which condition is here exposed and discredited The prevailing notion that the Gita teaches "*karma yoga*" interpreted as 'energism" by such great scholars as Tilak, becomes untenable in the light of the phrase *buddhau saranam anvichchha* (do thou take refuge in pure reason) in verse 49 This recommendation, though particularly pertinent to this chapter, holds good throughout, and references to action never have a mandatory character, but are only to be seen in every case to be merely of a permissive character, as has been sufficiently recognized by Sankara We have already noted this in our comment on verse 47

No redundancy is implied in the words *yogaya yujyasva* (unite yourself to a unitive outlook) Pure yoga is independent of particular values implied, and can be spoken of as uniting with itself in an absolutist sense There is therefore no more vagueness than when one says "nothing succeeds like success" All that we can say by way of explanation is that pure yoga exists for its own sake It is the cancelling-out of all opposites into a neutral state of non suffering or global wisdom.

The reference in verse 50 to merit and demerit is an answer to Arjuna's concern about the "great sin" (*mahat papa*) of

war in I, 45 It is also the intention here to cancel out the merit of a ritualistic heaven, in the same way as attainment and non attainment are to be abandoned (as in verse 48)

The *buddhi* (reason) here being of an absolutist kind, transcends all relativistic values, whether postive or negative

Kausalam (often weakly or wrongly translated as ' skill ") suggests an element of reason or even intuition rather than mechanistic ability Mere action gets purified or sublimated by the rationalizing touch of wisdom

The word *ubhe* (both) in verse 50 is significant in yoga, understood as the cancelling out of ambivalent aspects

[51] *karmajam buddhiyukta hi*
phalam tyaktva manishinah
janmabandha vinirmuktah
padam gachchhanty anamayam

By affiliation to unitive reason wise men, transcending birth bondage, renouncing benefit interest, go onwards to a state beyond all pain

The rest of the chapter is a description of what is to be understood as *brahmi sthitih* (the state of being established in the Absolute) in contradistinction to absolutism in the context of samkhya as covered in the section concluding with verse 39

The word *Brahman* (the Absolute) has its origin in the Vedas and samkhya has the same absolutism, but because of its being a heterodox school of rationalism, the absolutism is treated separately, in order to relate each expression to its proper context Naturally, therefore, in this second section there is a drastic revision of Vedism as we have already noticed in verses II, 42 46

[52] *yada te mohakalilam*
buddhir vyatitarishyati
tada gantasi nirvedam
srotavyasya srutasya cha

When your reason has transcended the dross of vagueness then you attain to that neutral attitude both in respect of what is to be learnt and what has already been heard

[53] *srutivi pratipanna te*
yada sthasyati nischala
samadhav achala buddhis
tada yogam avapsyasi

When disillusioned respecting the (contradictory injunctions of the) scriptures (Vedas) your reasoning stands steady in *samadhi* (supreme peace) then you shall have reached yoga (unitive contemplation)

Arjuna uvacha

[54] *sthitaprajnasya ka bhasha*
samadhisthasya kesava
sthitadhih kim prabhasheta
kim asita vrajeta kim

Arjuna said
What is the way of one whose reason is well founded, who is established in *samadhi* (supreme peace) O Kesava (Krishna)? How does he discourse, what his state of being, how does he move about?

In these verses the same attack on the Vedas begun in verse 42 is continued The Vedas are referred to as a confusing entanglement in verse 52, and in verse 53 Vedic texts are referred to as having a distracting effect not conducive to wisdom or yoga The relativist Vedas have to be transcended and got rid of somehow before unitive contemplation can establish itself

This contemplation was what was enjoyed by the sages (*manishinah*), as verse 51 declares The example of the wise sages is held up It is neither priests nor logicians who are praised here These latter can fall into opposite errors, but the pure contemplative seer escapes duality and attains to peace with himself

The word *nirvedam* in verse 52 need not mean "indifference" as often translated by apologists for the Vedas, but can connote "freedom from the Vedas as scriptures of a particular religion This will help us to see the contrast all the better between relativism and absolutism

The word *srotavyasya* (to be heard hereafter) points to the possibility of relativism in any future religions in addition to

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The word *srotavyasya* (to be heard hereafter) points to the possibility of relativism in any future religions, in addition to

the relativism found in the religion of the Hindu Vedas which has already been heard

That contemplation and yoga are the same, as we have taken them to be in verse 51, is justified by the last line of verse 53 Serenity, steadiness and unitiveness are some of the characteristics of contemplation indicated here These are to be further elaborated, prompted by a specific question by Arjuna, which follows in the next verse

Arjuna's question is intended by the author as a device to make the discussion conform to the *Guru sishya samvada* (teacher-disciple dialogue) pattern The revised standpoint of the Gita itself is to be taught in such replies to questions by Krishna as Guru

Many aspects of spirituality or ethics previously alluded to incidentally, find here a revalued statement which could be considered a *siddhanta* (finalized doctrine), not covering the whole subject but, in so far as the problems are relevant to the chapter

For purposes of clear visualization of the spiritual values involved, such final teachings take the form of the personal description of the man who is held up as a model according to the spirituality understood in the Gita He is sometimes praised as being "dear" or "most dear" to the Absolute At other times he is said to "enter into" or "to abide in" the Absolute A typical yogi, the man who conforms to absolutist ways in life, or one who has obtained the highest, or is merely destined for the highest, are seen to be referred to generally at the end of the various chapters of the Gita

Here we come upon a sequence of verses extolling a certain type of spirituality Similar sets of verses describing the yogi in other contexts will be found in IV, 18 24, V, 23 28, VI, 27-32, XII, 13 20, XIII, 27 32, XIV, 22 26 and XVIII, 50 57

Stability or being properly established in the path of the Absolute is the central topic of the present group of verses, as can be seen by the repetition of the word *sthiti* (steadiness) The culminating verse 70 gives us the spiritual content that is intended in these verses to be described in detail There it is a mystical state—compared to an ocean into which all river waters enter to *fill*, though in principle only All the component factors or necessary conditions that contribute to this culminating state of the absolutist, not in the context of Vedism or of any other religion, but in the plain context of *buddhi* (pure reason), are referred to one after another, in these succeeding verses

Arjuna s question *vrajeta kim* (How does he—the contemplative—walk?) merely shows his eagerness for a precise answer, and the answer is as exact as could be possible in a *shastra* (textbook) which the Gita claims to be It gives definitions and examples, and the reference to the tortoise in verse 58 makes the answer as graphic as it could be, when trying to describe the type of introversion of a contemplative

Sribhagavan uvacha

[55] *prajahati yada kaman*
sarvan partha manogatan
atmany eva tmana tushtah
sthitaprajnas tado chyate

Krishna said
When one banishes all desires that enter the mind O Partha (Arjuna), satisfied in the Self by the Self alone then he is said to be one of well founded reason

The first thing that happens to a man who begins to tread the path of the contemplative consists in his disaffiliation from the various desires with which he is attached to different grades of relativistic values in everyday life These are collectively called *kamah* (desires) Such desires are meant to include all those desires which are capable of entering into or affecting the mind as the word *manogatan* (going into the mind) indicates

Desires can be said to enter the mind or be afferent" in character as opposed to efferent impulses which may be said to go outwards to each object of desire Contemplation is primarily concerned with the former—those that enter the mind Hence their mention here A man who purposely or actively searches for objects of desire falls outside the scope of contemplation altogether

The word *prajahati*—often translated throws away —would be better translated shedding inasmuch as no activity is implied therein The analogy of a snake casting its skin familiar in the Upanishads is the idea intended here

The expression *atmany eva tmana tushtah* satisfied in Self by Self) seems to be a tall order for a beginner in contemplation,

but no contemplative worth the name could be considered so if he was still attached to any value that was outside This condition is both the alpha and omega of contemplative life There are no short cuts or made-easy ways to wisdom

[56] *duhkheshu anudvignamanah*
sukheshu vigatasprihah
vita raga bhaya krodhah
sthitadhir munir uchyate

He whose mind is unaffected by mishaps, who on happy occasions too evinces no interest, rising above attachment, anxiety or anger, such a sage recluse is said to be of well founded reason

The steady neutrality of a contemplative is described now in detail Desire, fear and anger form, as it were, a kind of triangle spelling evil as factors working against the contemplative life These are not to be understood as an enumeration of social vices as often treated by public exponents of the Gita Vices in a social sense are surely more than just three This trio of evil comes into the discussion in many parts of the Gita (e g , iii, 37, xvi, 21) The trio are organically related to the subject inasmuch as they make contemplation impossible of being even initiated The attempt here is merely to remove impediments to contemplation and not to teach virtues If this is not understood then the error is often committed of looking on the Gita as a *dharma shastra* (a code of conduct)

Pain and pleasure are the two components of desire The steady contemplative is unaffected by either—in other words, both are equal to him Good or bad cancel each other out as twin factors of relative dualism Reflexes of the nervous system act in one plane and reflexive thought is unaffected by them Contemplation belongs to the order of reflexive thought It transcends the level of mere automatisms which depend upon such extraneous factors as heat and cold leading to pleasure or pain, as already mentioned in ii 14 More complex causes of pleasure or pain which are still relativist, are referred to here The contemplative attains a neutral position There is a touch of heroism implied in such a picture of one properly established in wisdom here Such heroism is foreign to types of persons who lack seriousness

[57] *yah sarvatra 'nabhisnehas*
tat tat prapya subhasubham
na 'bhinandati na dveshti
tasya prajna pratishthita

He who remains in all cases unattached on gaining such or such desirable-undesirable end, who neither welcomes (anything) nor rejects in anger, his reason is well founded.

Here the same detachment is brought out in terms of events more generally conceived, as forming the successive personal environments of an individual The contemplative should not be depressed when he does not have a nice time in society, nor should he be exuberant in gay company He must be free from such fluctuating moods.

That a general disposition is intended here is indicated by the word *sarvatra* (in every given situation)

The word *anabhisnehah* (without outgoing attachments) purposely puts the stress on attachments reaching outwards, rather than on normal interests that flow like rivers inwards to produce that plenitude referred to in ii, 70

The words *subha* (favourable or good) and *asubha* (unfavourable) carry a wider range of meaning than just pleasure or pain which were referred to earlier

The words *tat tat* (that that) refer to each event being treated disjunctly and not as each event should be treated, as belonging to a continuous process proper to one who has a contemplative attitude. The relation of anger pleasure and desire are again indicated Thus vicious circle is completely described in verses 62 and 63 which follow

[58] *yada samharate cha 'yam*
kurmo 'nganiva sarvasah
indriyani 'ndriyarthebhyas
tasya prajna pratishthita

Again as when a tortoise retracts its limbs from all sides the senses are (withdrawn) from objects of sense-interest, his reason is well founded

The word *sarvasah* (from everything from everywhere) is significant The word shows that not only the limbs of the

tortoise, but the head and tail as well are withdrawn. The limbs are withdrawn from the sides and the head and tail, likewise, vertically Both actual and perceptual causes of dis traction are here equally covered and ruled out That the perceptual is also covered is clear from the opening word of verse 62, *dhyayato* (thinking intently, *i e*, on the objects of sense) and from the general statement in iii, 6 where one who dwells even mentally on the objects of sense while con trolling his actions, is decried as a *mithyacharah* (a man with wrong notions of living)

This verse draws attention also to the fact that mere transcendence of duality in the sense indicated in the previous verses is not all that is required for contemplation—as the words *cha ayam* (also, thus Self) indicate A wholesale introversion of all aspects of the spirit into a central unitive core of being is here recommended This might be said to cover what is known as the item of *pratyahara* (withdrawal), one of the steps to yoga mentioned by Patanjali It might be permissible to say that the picture of contemplation presented by the Gita has no resemblance to the graded progression in yoga envisaged by Patanjali, the yoga of Patanjali being a sister system of the samkhya of Kapila, suffering from the same taint of a dualistic approach to yoga, which the Gita revalues or resolves in unitive terms

[59] *vishaya vinivartante*
niraharasya dehinah
rasavarjam raso 'py asya
param drishtva nivartate

Objective interests revert without the relish for them on starving the embodied (of them) Even the (residual) relish reverts on the One Beyond being sighted

It would be best for us to get the gist of this verse before entering into the construction, which might read rather involved, especially in the original Samskrit If we should think of sex—to take an example—this verse wants to say that mere sex starvation will not destroy all relish for sex for ever When however, an interest higher than sex prevails, then such relish is destroyed without the possibility of sex asserting itself any more Such a dominant interest could be

nothing less than a full confrontation, in a strictly bi polar sense, of the Absolute Itself, as the *summum bonum* of life. Then the return to the Self becomes complete The rest is clear from the translation

Param, referring to the Absolute, may also be translated as "the Supreme," or "the One Beyond" as here

The word *vishaya* here covers sensuous interests generally, and does not refer specially to objects of sense as is more usual

Dehi (body dweller) corresponds both to the libido on the one side and to the Self on the other, for the purposes of this verse

The word *nivartate* (turns back) comes from the same root as *nivritti* (withdrawal) and *nirvana* (emancipation, negatively conceived) All these are equally suggestive of the *nivrittimarga* (path of negation) of the Vedanta (or the *via negativa* of European mysticism) as Sankara has explained in the preface to his commentary on the Gita

[60] *yatato hy api kaunteya*
purushasya vipaschitah
indriyani pramathini
haranti prasabham manah

Even with a man of wisdom, O Son of Kunti (Arjuna), in spite of his effort, excited sense interests (can) forcibly distract the mind

[61] *tani sarvani samyamya*
yukta asita matparah
vase hi yasye ndriyani
tasya prajna pratishthita

Restraining every one of them he should rest unitively established, having Me for his Supreme (ideal) He in whom sense interests are subdued, his reason is well founded

The converse case of a wise man who falls short of being a contemplative as understood in the preceding verses, is dealt with in verse 60 here and in some of the following verses, as a slight digression from the description of a contemplative which otherwise continues almost to the end of this chapter

The difference between the *vipaschitah* (wise man) of verse 60 and the contemplative of verse 61, consists in the latter being *matparah* (having Me for Supreme Goal)—the "Me" here standing for the Absolute of verse 59 The subtle contrast implicit in the two cases of verses 60 and 62 is referred to again in xv, 11 The man of discursive reasoning cannot stand up against temptations, while the contemplative who has established a bi-polar relationship with the Absolute gains this stability The maximum amount of mechanical or ordinary reasoning does not avail without the bi polarity implied in all dialectical reasoning

The word *pramathini* means "excited" or suffering from exaggeration of values, to the extent of their being a menace to calm reasoning itself Values tend to be distorted and magnified beyond proportion under conditions described in the verses which follow

The *prasabham* (by force) meant here can be further visualized from the example of the gale driven ship of verse 67 It is a force contrary to contemplation and comes near to the idea of concupiscence of Christian theology Non theologically, it has a simpler meaning in the Gita A living being tends to be related to everyday values which could be so exaggerated as to endanger mere happiness, not to speak of contemplative happiness

In the expression, in verse 61, *vase hi* (under control indeed) the force of "indeed" is to draw the contrast with the case of a man as described in verse 60 Here the senses do not run away, but are on his side This makes all the difference which is further examined minutely in verse 64

[62] *dhyayato vishayan pumsah*
sangas teshu 'pajayate
sangat samjayate kamah
kamat krodho 'bhijayate

Meditating on objects of sense interest there is born in man an attachment for them, from attachment rises passion, in the face of passion (frustrated) arises rage.

[63] *krodhad bhavati sammohah*
sammohat smritivibhramah
smritibhramsad buddhinaso
buddhinasat pranasyati

From rage is produced distortion of values and from distortion of values memory lapse and from memory lapse comes loss of reason and from loss of reason he perishes

These verses comprise the psychological analysis of a situation in which a man so to say perishes contemplatively as stated at the end of verse 63 This is to be taken as a spiritual death only as it is common knowledge that mere indulgence in sensuality as we see in nature does not kill Out of natural limits however some sort of death may also be implied

Attachments tend to be strengthened and magnified to the extent that the mind cultivates sensuous propensities At a given moment the mind through one particular sense attraction or through a group of sense attractions establishes a bi polar relation with an external object of desire as described in verse 67 The relation then goes out of hand and the resulting exaggeration of value leads to psychic disturbances like anger when impediments to the relation become interposed

Anger adds to the emotional confusion resulting in *sammohah* (a delusion) which evil invades the memory itself and memory or the duration factor being important in contemplative functioning contemplation itself thus becomes impossible Infatuation thus results in spiritual death *Buddhi* (reason) here is not mere ratiocination as in verse 60 It is rather the instrument of contemplation

Death here may be compared to a kind of short circuit going across the path of free contemplation

[64] *raga dvesha viyuktais tu*
vishayan indriyais charan
atmavasyair vidheyatma
prasadam adhigachchhati

But he whose Self is subdued whose attachment and aversion are both within the sway of the Self although his senses still move amidst sense interests he wends towards a state of spiritual clarity

The converse case of a man who becomes happy through contemplation correctly applied to actual life is detailed here and in the two succeeding verses

A subtle point is to be noticed here. Objective interests, when purified, begin to accord with or go with the corresponding subjective factors of sensuousness, or the "seats" of the different senses, called *indriyais*. This purification, as indicated here, merely consists of the cancelling-out of attraction and repulsion. The senses are treated neutrally or unitively and the subjective counterparts of the senses go hand in hand without conflict. A bi-polarity is again established, this time of a contemplative order. By virtue of sensuality being *ātmavasyair* (under the control of the Self) the Self itself as a whole is in effect brought into submission; in other words, there is no remaining conflict between aspects of the Self, subjective or objective. The consciousness of this global unitive Self is conducive to the peace or absence of conflict called *prasāda*, often translated "grace"

[65] *prasāde sarva duhkhānām*
hānir asyo 'pajāyate
prasanna chetaso hy āsu
buddhih paryavatishthate

By spiritual clarity there takes place the effacement for him of all sufferings, and for one whose spirit has become lucid, very soon reason becomes properly founded.

How consciousness or spirit, when freed from emotional disturbances, gets a poise or a steadiness favourable to contemplation is stated here.

[66] *nā 'sti buddhir ayuktasya*
na chā 'yuktasya bhāvanā
na chā 'bhāvayatah sāntir
asāntasya kutah sukham

For one unbalanced there can be no reason, nor is there any creative-intuition for the unbalanced, and for one incapable of creative-intuition there could be no peace, and for the unpeaceful where could there be happiness?

Normal contemplative thinking takes place when aspects of the Self are harmonized. *Bhāvanā* here means creative intuition,

the word being derived from the root *bhāv* (to become) Peace results only when intuition comes into operation, along lines of creative becoming, which reconciles opposing tendencies of the mind Real happiness is the result of a global sense of being where currents and counter-currents are stilled in happiness, which can be said to be the goal of contemplation

[67]　*indriyānām hi charatām*
yan mano 'nuvidhiyate
tad asya harati prajnam
vayur navam iva 'mbhasi

Still moving amid sense interests that (item) to which the mind submits, that very item draws away the reasoning as the wind does a ship on the waters

This verse is to be contrasted with what is said in verse 64 and is meant to recapitulate and sum up the position of a man whose intelligence is carried away by sensuous values This happens very imperceptibly The senses are in constant motion like five birds moving on a branch which has five fruits or berries The mind, which is the more centralized organ of thought behind the moving senses, suddenly finds itself under the sway of some sense-interests in which one or more of the birds above may be involved Through this frail affiliation a bi-polarity becomes established which brings the disaster indicated in this verse

[68]　*tasmad yasya mahabaho*
nigrihitani sarvasah
indriyani 'ndriyarthebhyas
tasya prajna pratishthitā

Therefore, O Might Armed (Arjuna), he whose senses have been in every way withdrawn from sense interests, his reason is well-founded

This is a warning against the calamity referred to in the previous verse No loopholes can be left in the matter of keeping the senses from getting attached to sense objects. The need for whole-heartedness in this matter is indicated by the word *sarvasah* (in every way)

[69] *ya nisa sarvabhutanam*
tasyam jagarti samyami
yasyam jagrati bhutani
sa nisa pasyato muneh

What is night for all creatures, the one of self control keeps awake therein, wherein all creatures are wakeful, that is night for the sage recluse who sees

This verse has that peculiar construction found elsewhere (e g, iv, 18), stating the case as it were, in the form of an impossible paradox The Gita excels in this style and such verses constitute supreme examples of dialectical reasoning The nearest in modern literature is found in Bergson's writings where he bases himself on Zeno's paradoxes We are still here in the chapter on sāmkhya, where dualism is taken for granted, hence paradox is but normal In plain language what it says is that the contemplative lives in a world of his own which is the counterpart of the world in which the rest of creation lives There is an ambivalent reciprocal relation between the two which is here brought into close juxtaposition to be resolved more unitively in global terms as in the next verse and elsewhere

[70] *apuryamanam achala pratishtham*
samudram apah pravisanti yadvat
tadvat kama yam pravisanti sarve
sa santim apnoti na kamakami

Still getting filled, while fixed firm in immobility, the ocean remains, so too he into whom all interests enter, he attains to peace, not the craver of desires

The sublime rhapsody together with the vagueness of the similes of this verse are best left without analysis The ocean is not usually referred to as immovably established, nor as being filled Its plenitude and over all changelessness are here compared to the state of mind of a yogi He is not a *kamakami* (desirer of desirable objects) All relativistic values are small change compared to the gold coin of absolutism which his plenitude represents. Such plenitude brings peace

[71] *vihaya kaman yah sarvan*
pumams charati nihsprihah

nirmamo nirahamkarah
sa santim adhigachchhati

That man who giving up all attachments moves about desirelessly without owning anything and without egoism he goes to peace

[72] *esha brahmi sthitih partha*
nai nam prapya vimuhyati
sthitva syam antakale pi
brahmanirvanam richchhati

This is the state of being in the Absolute (*Brahman*) O Partha (Arjuna) on reaching which one suffers from delusion no more Established in this at the very last moments of life one reaches that final state of pure being (*nirvana*) in the Absolute (*Brahman*)

These concluding verses are meant to indicate the culminating results of contemplative reasoning

Besides *raga bhaya krodha* (passion fear anger) the trio already referred to in verse 56 there is the sense of I and mine on which depends the relation with external objects from whose attraction or repulsion all the three others arise Compare the triple gate of hell mentioned in XVI 21 There the vices attain a further degree of objectivity Egotism is therefore the root cause and the first enemy of contemplation whether in this chapter or even in chapter XVI It is at the base of the possessive relationship either personal ideolog cal or objective

When reason functions without any trace of such egotism then it may be said to function in a manner in keeping with the Absolute This is what is referred to as *brahmi sthitih* (the state—of reasoning—in keep ng or according with the Absolute)

Such a reason ng in tune with the Absolute if it could be maintained unaffected even when a man is faced with death qualifies him for *brahmavidya* (the science of the Absolute) or to final or absolute emancipation or withdrawal here called *brahmanirvana* wh ch is so rem niscent of Buddhist *nirvana* This is also in keeping with the science of this rational chapter which gives primacy to *buddhi* (pure reason) throughout

iti srimad bhagavadgitāsupanishatsu brahmavidyāyām
yogaśastre srikrishnarjunasamvade
sāmkhyayogo nāma dvitiyo 'dhyayah

Thus ends in the Upanishads of the Songs of God, in the Science of the Wisdom of the Absolute, in the Dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, the Second Chapter entitled Unitive Reasoning

CHAPTER III

THE UNITIVE WAY OF ACTION

Karma-Yoga

This chapter deals with *karma yoga* (unitive way of action) Lest readers should treat the problem casually, without knowing what the final doctrine of the Gita is, mixing up the necessary character of action with the contingent character of wisdom, to which confusion the reference to *karma* (action) in the previous chapter might have contributed, Arjuna here, in verse 1, is made to put the question in a very pointed manner, even going to the extent of suggesting that Krishna was purposely trying to confuse him regarding the relative superiority of action or wisdom

Samkhya (rationalism), *yoga* (unitive discipline) and *samnyāsa* (renunciation) are all brought into the discussion, and each has to be understood in relation to the context Yoga is not implied in samkhya as ordinarily understood Nor is reason brought under a unitive method in yoga schools anterior to the Gita *Karma* and *yoga* go more naturally together as they refer to actual discipline as in Patanjali But as we have seen, the yoga of the Gita does not confine itself to Patanjali yoga merely Both samkhya and yoga (with reference to *karma* implied in each of them) are revalued and restated by the Gita in this chapter

Samnyāsa (renunciation) and *siddhis* (attainments) are introduced incidentally as products of one or the other of these disciplines But all such culminate unitively, as indicated in the last verse of this chapter, in a man who is able to restrain the Self by the Self, while letting the necessary forces of life spend themselves out, taking them as counterparts of life, like the inevitable smoke that surrounds a lamp, as suggested in III, 38 What cannot be cured must be endured The necessary has to be permitted, and whether permitted or not, acts like breathing have to continue with everybody The more fundamental the actions are, the less is the choice left

The main teaching here is not the omission of the necessary or the inevitable, but the confronting of one's own necessities or inclinations unitively

It would be a capital error to think that, because of its title, this chapter preaches any doctrine of action or "energism"[1] Such an error could only be due to the promiscuous mixing-up by wishful thinking of the necessary and the contingent aspects of action, which this very chapter intends to clarify

Such a view would be no less absurd than if a man should say that the Gita teaches a doctrine of healthy breathing, or made breathing an obligatory law, instead of it teaching that good breathing was necessary for living, as being just healthy and natural The Gita only permits action as a necessary evil

The distinction is delicate but of vital importance for the right understanding of the doctrine of the Gita, if the Gita is not to be misused by interested parties, whether dictators or charlatans

Arjuna uvācha

[1] *Jyāyasi chet karmanas te*
mata buddhir janardana
tat kim karmani ghore mam
niyojayasi kesava

Arjuna said

If you are of the opinion, O Janārdana (Krishna), that reason is superior to action, why then in an action that is ghastly do you enjoin me, O Kesava (Krishna)?

[2] *vyamisrene 'va vākyena*
buddhim mohayasi 'va me
tad ekam vada nischitya
yena sreyo 'ham apnuyām

[1] We borrow this word from Bal Gangadhar Tilak's *Gita Rahasya or Karma-Yoga Sastra*, trans. by B. S Sukthankar, 1935, from which we extract the following "In short it is perfectly clear that the proper preaching in this place would be Energism (pravritti) and that, as all other things are only supporting Energism, that is as they are all auxiliary, the purport of the Gita religion must also be to support Energism, that is to support Action." (Vol. I, pp. 37-8).

By words that appear to be mixed up you seem to confound my reasoning Tell me after taking a decision of that one (way) by which I may obtain merit.

Waging war is referred to as *ghora* (terrible harsh ghastly) Life has its supple and tender aspects as well as certain aspects which are like the horns or nails of a beast. The horny aspects are extraneous to life Warfare refers to a zone of action in human life where the worst cruelty becomes fair This harshness applies to action generally perhaps in forms milder than in the case of war Competitive life in society is a kind of survival of the fittest which leaves its trail of cruelty somewhere in the form of poverty which constitutes the scum of any society anywhere The poor are the have nots who could not do better All forms of *karma* (action) including religious ritualism in the usual sense as belonging to the necessary side of life are condemned in the Gita and especially in this chapter in verses 38 39 where it is referred to as the eternal enemy of the wise

In the light of the above it is almost ironical to note that quite the contrary interpretation that the Gita teaches the obligatory duty of killing for a *kshatriya* (warrior) is enjoined Even to say that the Gita enjoins the parallel practice of wisdom and action (*jnana karma samuchchhaya*) has been sufficiently and effectively refuted by Sankara in his *Gita Bhashya*

If we could grasp the simple difference between permissive and necessary action though considered as evil on the one hand and the absence of any obligation and the contingent nature of a wisdom that is free which could have nothing mandatory about it on the other hand then the subtle difference intended in this chapter and implicit in many other chapters between *jnana* (wisdom) and *karma* (action) would be understood

Krishna has no real answer to Arjuna s question except by underlining that war is an evil that can hardly be avoided.

The word *sreyas* (spiritually superior) indicates that Arjuna is speaking more as an aspirant or disciple than as a perplexed warrior

In the Gita we should note as we proceed at least till chapter IX, that the realistic devices employed in earlier chapters are shed one after another Even the enemy in this chapter is

not an army of men, but merely one in the form of desire, difficult to overcome without the positive attitude of a fighter (see III, 43)

In verse 2 Arjuna insists on one final opinion and not many doctrines or solutions as some even learned people think the Gita teaches It has become a trite saying or a fashion to say that a man can extract whatever teaching he likes from it as if this was a compliment to this work which claims to be a *sastra* (an exact science) at the end of each chapter That would be like treating the scientific textbook as if it were a book of omens to be used for purposes of fortune-telling Arjuna insists on precise teaching and even seems to blame Krishna of vagueness which justifies later the reference to mistrust attributed there in turn to Arjuna in IX, 1

Sribhagavan uvacha

[3] *loke smin dvividha nishtha*
pura prokta maya nagha
jnanayogena samkhyanam
karmayogena yoginam

Krishna said
There are two kinds of disciplines in this world as declared in ancient times by me, O Sinless One (Arjuna) by the unitive way of wisdom (*jnana yoga*) of the samkhyas by the unitive way of action (*karma yoga*) of the yogis

Much vain discussion has accumulated round the meaning and the implications of this verse which speaks of *jnana* (wisdom) and *karma* (action) Most commentators, however, miss noticing one small point It is not wisdom and action that are contrasted here, it is yoga giving primacy to wisdom that is compared with yoga giving primacy to action These two hoary and respectable traditions have existed side by side implicitly or explicitly from the most ancient times Even the Upanishads refer to the samkhya (*e g*, *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, VI 13) and Prof Max Muller rightly points out that Brihaspati—author of two of the early Vedic hymns (x, 71 72)—belonged to a rationalistic school that resembled the samkhya unmistakably, as its parent, thus taking the whole tradition

of samkhya back to its remote antiquity[1] He also traces the samkhya to its early formulation in the *Tattva samasa*[2] which is much anterior to even Kapila s *Sutras* Ritualism likewise can be said to be far older than Jaimini s *Purva Mimamsa Sutras*

When Krishna says *maya* (by Me) with reference to these ancient schools of thought, what is meant is that such tendencies are natural to man and must be viewed from the standpoint of the Eternal or the Absolute, as belonging to human nature as such

The conscious yogic method or treatment employed in the Gita is a revaluation of the two currents of samkhya and yoga that have existed side by side Their distinctiveness tends to blend one with the other in this chapter, until all distinction is abolished in v, 4 5, both in a methodological and doctrinal sense The unitive way of yoga is applied, not only to each of the component parts of *jnana* (wisdom) and *karma* (action) but also to both taken together This is a peculiarity of the method of treatment which we have referred to already in chapter II Samkhya and yoga were subjected to the same treatment there as *jnana* and *karma* are treated in this chapter

Krishna is not speaking as a historical personage but as a representative of the timeless Absolute, and this point is further clarified in the beginning of chapter IV 4 5 To treat Krishna as a historical *avatar* (god incarnation) of a certain epoch, as many people do is contrary to the spirit of the Gita as we shall see under IV, 7 8 This historical approach has been the fecund cause of confusion in understanding the Gita To strain its symbolic implications is also another error equally to be avoided

[4] *na karmanam anarambhan*
naishkarmyam purusha snute
na cha samnyasanad eva
siddhim samadhigachchhati

By refraining from initiating activities a person does not come to have (the attainment of) transcending action (*naishkarmya*) nor can one by renunciation alone come to perfection

[1] pp 93 *et seq* Vol I *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy* by Max Muller (Susil Gupta Calcutta 1952)

[2] pp 10-11 and 28 *et seq* Vol. III *ibid.*

Two concepts which seem new are suddenly sprung on the reader here, namely, *samnyasa* (renunciation) and *siddhi* (attainment) We are familiar with *siddhis* in the context of yoga and of *samnyāsa* in the context of ritualistic works *Naishkarmya* (transcendence of works) is also familiar to us as a *siddhi* (attainment) of a *samnyasin* (a renouncer) There is a peculiar interlocking of ends and means in this verse, whose heads and tails have to be disentangled before this verse can make any clear meaning Avoidance of works is the *end* and renunciation the *means* in one pair here, while attainments are the end and action the means in the other pair

Whether in the context of yoga or sāmkhya, man wishes to transcend the bondage of necessity, and the verse wants to tell us that means distinct from the end or end from the means, looked at dualistically, leads nowhere Ends and means have to be related organically or unitively through an intuitive or living method or discipline. A certain dedication to the Absolute is common to all disciplines, as the Gita will explain

Mere relinquishment of works could be from obstinacy and mere shaven-headed *samnyāsa* could be barren like the fig-tree in the Bible, devoid of any human value The word *asnute* (enjoys) suggests that it is a human value which is under reference here The word *siddhi* (attainment) must also be understood in the same way Barren wisdom leads nowhere The subtle implications of this verse will become clearer when we come to the same subject as discussed at the beginning of Chapter xviii, 4-12

Spiritual progress is not to be conceived *in vacuo*, or with disparity as between ends and means

[5] *na hi kaschit kshanam api*
jatu tishthaty akarmakrit
karyate hy avasah karma
sarvah prakritijair gunaih

Not even for a single instant can one ever remain engaged in no action at all By virtue of modalities (*gunas*) born from nature, all are made to engage in action helplessly.

Here the necessary character of action is referred to It is sufficiently clear and calls for no comment except to note

that the motive force of action is the natural propensity (*guna*) of each type of person, as further elaborated in chapter XVIII under three modes

[6] *karmendriyani samyamya*
ya aste manasa smaran
indriyarthan vimudhatma
mithyacharah sa uchyate

He who sits controlling the organs of activity while ruminating mentally over items of sensuous interest, such a lost soul is said to be one of spurious conduct.

[7] *yas tv indriyani manasa*
niyamya 'rabhate 'rjuna
karmendriyaih karmayogam
asaktah sa visishyate

He, on the other hand, who keeps the senses under control by means of the mind, and then commences unitive activity (*karma-yoga*) while still unattached, he excels

These two verses are complementary The urge of necessity cannot be stifled Giving such necessity its due place, without trying to put the cart before the horse, is what is recommended

The *mithyacharah* (one of unreal, spurious conduct), too strongly translated 'hypocrite,' is here just anybody who falls into the error of trying to abolish necessary activity Instead of doing this, one should attempt to give necessary activity a new or spiritual orientation The method of doing this is indicated in verse 7

The mind, which is deeper seated than the organs of action, and where all action may be said to reside in a potential form of flux before taking rigid shape, has to be used as the instrument for controlling the sense organs first and turning them inwards Such a reorientation still leaves room for and gives full scope to a new set of activities, ranging from the instinctive to the most sublime form of self consciousness, till the Self rests on itself without activity This last is the state of a perfected contemplative

The word *arabhate* (commences) indicates how a new set of actions is initiated Controlling the senses is not the same as

suppressing all activity. Actions have to be sublimated in the light of contemplation, and not repressed. The organs of action have to be used in a revised manner in keeping with the discipline of yoga as understood in this chapter.

The word *niyamya* (having controlled) is to show clearly that the inner brakes are applied first and not after the momentum of action has been initiated The flow of impulses shows a reversal in its order, and not a stoppage or suppression, as also indicated already in II. 64 and II. 70. The yogi is active inwardly, through *bhāvanā* (creative intuition) as mentioned in II. 66, and his introverted nature is made further clear in II. 69.

[8] *niyatam kuru karma tvam*
karma jyāyo hy akarmanah
sarirayātrā 'pi cha te
na prasidhyed akarmanah

Do engage yourself in action that is necessary; activity is indeed better than non-activity and even the bodily life of yours would not progress satisfactorily through non-action.

Here the necessity and inevitability of action even physiologically understood is further referred to. In the first line, however, we should note that action is said to be *jyāyah* (superior) to inaction only, and not to wisdom, which was its counterpart in verse 3. To make the mistake of thinking that inaction here refers to a wise man and that the sense of the teaching of the Gita deprecates wisdom, is a form of error into which many people fall. A progressive scale of activities leading to wisdom is what is recommended, instead of the mere vacuity of inaction.

The word *niyatam* (necessarily binding by its nature) refers to actions where no option is possible, and not to any elaborate ramifications of scriptural injunctions (as understood in II, 43) as so often wrongly supposed. Even scriptural injunctions, to the extent that they are inevitable however, are natural and to be performed, the fact of being mentioned in the scriptures being itself no disqualification to their being put into practice.

Even bodily metabolism depends on some kind of action. It is in the most comprehensive sense that action is to be understood here.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENT ON VERSES 9-17

The student of the Gita should have a precise notion about *karma* (action) as employed in verses 9 17 here These verses bring the subject of *karma* (action) as understood in the ritualistic context of the *agnihotra* (burnt offering) into close scrutiny *Karma* (action) primarily suggests to the Indian *mind ritualist action whether worship of the ancestors or the* gods (*devas*) Worship of the ancestors as it constitutes now normally the *purva paksha* (the side of the anterior sceptic) of the Gita revaluation was referred to already by Arjuna the *disciple and condemned indirectly as being non Aryan in* II 2 Aryan ritualism proper is concerned with the pleasing or propitiation of Indra and other gods (*devas*) through burnt *offerings Although the word karma covers all activity the* attention is focussed here more particularly on sacrificial ritualism This is but normal (*Karma* also refers to the ques tion of how a man s past actions affect his future or destiny This doctrine of *karma* or action refers to this relation between the past and the future in individual life and the theory of reincarnation comes in as a corollary of the doctrine of *karma* all of which should be differentiated and not confused with the ritualistic *karma* referred to here)

Even while this section deals with ritualistic action it does so it should be noted side by side with and in contradistinction to necessary and obligatory or even biological aspects of *karma* (action) The subject of *nishkama karma* (dispassionate action) has already been covered in the previous comments on samkhya and it is not raised here as dispassionate action refers to the non dualistic treatment of ends and means which is a theoretical subject In this chapter we face actuality more directly

Karma yoga (unitive action) is too easily looked upon by many writers wrongly as being synonymous with the doctrine of *nishkama karma* (dispassionate action) Moreover items of social service or duty which have an obligatory character fall outside the scope of *karma yoga* (unitive action) as understood in this chapter All *ishta purta karmah* (action involving religious duty or pious acts from the studying of scriptures to the planting of trees etc) also fall outside the scope of *karma yoga* (unitive action) as properly understood in Vedanta

The Gita being essentially a Vedantic text does not primarily concern itself with social duties even in the form of service

to sections of the population. Action is taken in its most comprehensive sense as binding the whole of humanity The Ashvattha tree (xv, 1-3) has shoots that spread upwards and downwards in this human world, and is described as having *karmanubandhini* (a binding consequence through action). Necessary action binds the whole of humanity. Free or contingent action should be distinguished first from this general mass of human action taken as a whole This is what is attempted in verse 9 here Free action conforms to the pattern to be known under the category of a *yajna* (sacrifice) as indicated in verse 10 here There are other possible varieties of action mentioned in iv, 16 18 The *karma-yoga* (unitive action) of this chapter consists of treating necessary and contingent aspects of action in such a manner as to eliminate any residue of sin or evil, so that there is an equalization or harmony

Pure, free or contingent action arises out of merely necessary action in the form of worship which naturally belongs to the context of ritualistic sacrifice in the Indian mind, and hence the graded references to (1) Prajāpati (the Lord of Progeny) in verse 10 here, and to (2) *devās* (gods) in verse 11, to (3) burnt sacrifice in verse 13, to (4) Brahma in verse 15, to (5) the cosmological and psychological wheel in verse 16, all with a certain ascending order of value or superiority, culminating in the reference to "the Self content in the Self" in verse 17

These follow a graded sequence consistent with the cosmology and epistemology of the Vedanta, ranging from creation to Self-realization This series of verses implies a secret mystical doctrine which has been the fecund cause of differences between Vedāntins such as Sankarā, Rāmānuja and Madhvā, the duality between *prajah* (progeny) and *yajnah* (sacrifice) being resolved in different ways by these three great *achāryas* (teachers)

By giving primacy to the concept of the Self, in verse 17 here, the Gita in fact solves this question of duality by a final appeal to psychology, although the discussion begins cosmologically with an implicit duality which is inevitable Each *āchārya* (teacher), according as he is more interested in theology or religion than in Self realization as such, is left free to derive his own doctrine from whatever stage of the discussion—between the extremes indicated in this series in verses 9-17—as may be most convenient for his purposes

The concept of an Ishvara (Lord) who is still beyond *maya* (relativist principle), or the concept of an Ishvara subject to *maya*, or even an Ishvara who has nothing to do with

relativism at all, could all be legitimately related organically to the development of the subject matter of this section, as has actually been done by Sankarā, Rāmanuja and Madhvā

[9] *yajnarthat karmano 'nyatra*
loko 'yam karma bandhanah
tadartham karma kaunteya
mukta sangah samachara

> Outside of activity with a sacrificial purpose, this world is bound by action Even with such a purpose, do engage in work, O Kaunteya (Arjuna), freed of all attachments

There are two kinds of action to be distinguished in this verse first, that necessary or binding action with which the whole world could be said to be bound, secondly, that kind of action which is done with the motive of a sacrifice, the sacrifice itself being a second interest or end and which, taken together with the action itself, determines its character

This second category comes nearest to the kind of action which is done for its own sake, which is an end in itself, not utilitarian at all, but rather to be idealistically understood As we have said already, the duality between ends and means is here abolished This latter kind of action is what is recommended in the verses that follow, taking one *yajnartha* (end of sacrifice) after another in a certain graded order as indicated above The sacrifice in the Gita is unitively conceived with no duality between ends and means as so finally formulated in the verse so often repeated of iv 24 In verse 17 here, however, instead of the concept of *Brahman* (the Absolute), the concept of Self serves the same purpose

The word *muktasangah* (abandoning attachment) does not mean that one has no goal at all Such an interpretation would come into conflict with *tadartham* (for the sake of that) One has to be attached to a goal pertaining to the particular contemplative context in each case and discard the extraneous or third factors which may be called 'horizontal' values that interfere with the 'vertical bi-polarity unitively conceived as between ends and means

[10] *sahayajnah prajah srishtvā*
puro 'vacha prajapatih

anena prasavishyadhvam
esha vo 'stv ishta kamadhuk

In ancient times, having created the peoples with sacrifice as pertaining to them (necessarily), Prajapati (the Lord of the peoples) said "By this shall you grow and multiply let this be to you the milch cow of all desires "

Here the milk of *ishta kamadhuk* (the cow answering to every desire) covers the whole range of possible human values from the most ordinary to the highest These values result as a synthesis between the various *yajnah* or pure acts or sacrifices performed by the *prajah* or people at large The presiding factor involved in the whole situation or primordial pattern under reference here is the *pati* or Lord of all *prajah* or peoples Prajapati (Lord of the peoples) is the Absolute understood in the context of human progeny as such grows or multiplies like the sands of the seashore or the stars of the sky The verse wants to state the law of all life as one to be conceived in a bi polar fashion Pure action has its counterpart in its pure ends and progeny has its counterpart in its *pati* (Lord) *Prajah* (peoples or progeny) and *pati* (Lord) together constitute the Absolute Being who may be said to ordain everything Between *yajna* (the pure or sacrificial act) and the *praja* or offspring all possible benefits accrue to man by virtue of pure action as between man and the Absolute

Note that *yajnah* (sacrifices) do not refer to any single form of ritualistic sacrifice, but to all pure acts proper pertaining to individuals whether in the Brahmanical or any other religious context Each man, according to his own background, has his own pure act of sacrifice, belonging to his own natural background

[11] *devan bhavayata nena*
te deva bhavayantu vah
parasparam bhavayantah
sreyah param avapsyatha

With this do you gratify the gods (*devas*) and they the gods gratify you, thus gratifying reciprocally you shall reach to supreme merit.

The duality between *prajah* (peoples) and *yajnah* (sacrifices) treated as counterparts in verse 10, is further clarified here, where the counterparts are *devas* (the shining gods) and *vah* (you, *plural*) Prajapati is still speaking, and the ambivalent bi polar relationship stated as between the counterparts, which are properly brought side by side

The supreme good results from the synthesis or interaction between the gods and the peoples treated in the plural No blemish of polytheism, however, is here to be understood, the two counterparts being meant merely to be cancelled out in terms of the resultant *param* (supreme) good which is the Absolute unitive value *Brahman* (the Absolute) is primarily a value and not a monotheistic nor even a monistic entity as often understood by professors and theologians of the Christian world who wish, generously perhaps to concede to pagan writers this respectable status which according to them belongs only to civilized religions or cultures as they understand them But Vedanta is meant to be free from all doctrinal 'isms' of any kind

The word *parasparam* (each the other) is a remarkable statement in its implications Gods are as helpless as men There is the remarkable passage in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (I iv, 10) "Verily, indeed, as many animals would be of service to a man, even so each single person is of service to the gods If even one animal is taken away, it is not pleasant What then, if many? Therefore it is not pleasing to those (gods) that men should know this (i e that 'I am the Absolute')" Or, as the *Kural* of the Tamils would put it, the gods would perish if there was no rain, because there would be no food with which to worship them (*Tiru k kural*, 18)

[12] *ishtan bhogan hi vo deva*
dasyante yajna bhavitah
tair dattan apradayai bhyo
yo bhunkte stena eva sah

Those gods shall bestow on you all gratifications you desire one who eats what is given to them without giving in turn to them, he is a thief indeed

Prajapati is still speaking, and the multiplicity of gods referred to in this verse are only incidental extra characters

brought in for purposes of discussion only. This verse elaborates the same sentiment as the last verse but adds that he is a "thief" who is one-sided in his conduct, not recognizing the bi-polarity implicit in the situation. He is called *aghāyur* (one who is sinful in his life) in III, 16. When a man thinks of himself alone without a second counterpart of any kind elsewhere, he resembles a lame man hopping on one leg. One has to live for another, or for others generally. When fortune smiles one has to balance it with an equalizing generosity. Such is the simple lesson to be derived from this verse. The question of gods being pleased, etc., is of the nature of a literary flourish to the discussion.

[13] *yajna sishtāsinah santo*
muchyante sarva kilbishaih
bhunjate te tv agham pāpā
ye pachanty ātma kāranāt

The good man who eats of the remnants of a sacrifice is absolved of all faults: they, however, eat of evil (itself) the sinners who cook with themselves (alone) for motive.

Here, instead of the direct words of Prajāpati, we have the same subject continued in general terms. This verse accentuates the evil of one-sidedness of the last verse. The recognition of the principle of sacrifice is the corrective. Sinners become *santah* (the good) by such recognition of the second pole of human interest represented by sacrifice here. The good man cooks for himself and at least for another. What he enjoys as an individual is the remainder of what has been unitively enjoyed by both the counterparts of a sacrificial situation together, already. It is in this sense that the word *sishta* (remainder) is to be understood. His selfishness, if any, is to be satisfied with what is left over from what has been offered to another or the general good or God or the Absolute.

Conversely, the verse goes on to say that one-sided enjoyment or "eating" of sin itself, which means only something that is not good—is to be understood as a kind of spiritual poison, according to the subtle dialectics of the Gita. There is an interplay of opposite values here which should not be missed by the reader.

[14] *annad bhavanti bhutani*
parjanyad annasambhavah
yajnad bhavati parjanyo
yajnah karma samudbhavah

Food is the cause of beings and from rain food is produced, sacrifice has its effect in rain and sacrifice has its origin in action

Sacrifice itself as understood in the last verse is a link in a chain which has its own cyclic succession and which is kept moving by an invisible wheel referred to in verse 16 It is to be expected that the modern mind would feel very unconvinced by the picture of phenomenal and psychological factors that freely enter here to maintain the cyclic succession of causes and effects fancifully described in this verse Sacrifice is spoken of as a rain making principle Again sacrifice is supposed to arise from action Thus rain becomes related to action indirectly Except for the link between sacrifice and rain, all else is fairly evident Sacrifice here is the central concept in the whole discussion and if we rid the idea of sacrifice of all that is extraneous to it, such as the gods on one side and the *prajah* (peoples) on the other, and remove the scaffolding of a Prajapati who, as we said is used for literary requirements, what remains is a numinous factor in the sense that sacrifice itself is the principle of the Absolute As such it is the medium of occasionalism as understood in Cartesian philosophy

Anything good that happens to man comes from the interaction of opposing factors which together constitute what is called the numinous Sacrifice is thus a link between the here and the hereafter Our necessary actions in this world, when they become ever purer motivated, reach to a value that is beyond, when they are translated into terms of human benefit and goodness reaching down to us in the form of benefits such as rainfall, on which we and all life thrive These two movements taken together result in a central chance value which represents *Brahman* (the Absolute) as sacrifice This will be clarified further in the next verse.

[15] *karma brahmodbhavam viddhi*
brahma kshara samudbhavam
tasmat sarvagatam brahma
nityam yajne pratishthitam

of vicious life time lives O Partha (Arjuna), in vain (indeed)

The Upanishadic way *of life is what the Gita wants to* uphold When ritualistic actions are subjected to the revaluation implied in the Upanishads life according to the Gita, becomes worthwhile once again and not one sided Life has to be lived in tune with the cosmology and psychology of *the Absolute before Self realization as implied in verse 17* can be properly established where action is finally transcended

The word *iha* (here) brings us back to the world of action in the here and now although still conceived in the light of *the Eternal Life otherwise becomes worthless or empty as* suggested by the word *mogham* (vain)

[17] *yas tv atmaratir eva syad*
atmatriptas cha manavah
atmany eva cha samtushtas
tasya karyam na vidyate

But for him who happens to be attached to the Self alone, who finds full satisfaction in the Self for such *a man who is happy in the Self as such, too,* there is nothing that he should do

By this verse the possibility of a man who can do altogether without ritualistic sacrifice is recognized A pure samkhya philosopher for example who happens to be directly established in Self knowledge who is innocent of Vedism and all the ritual it implies is here absolved from obligation to perform any rituals however exalted they might be *in the* scale of revalued ritualism here expounded.

[18] *nai va tasya kritena 'rtho*
na kritene ha kaschana
na cha sya sarvabhuteshu
kaschid arthavyapasrayah

Neither is there anything indeed for him resulting from work done nor any from work omitted here nor is there either for him any dependence in respect of anything derivable from any being whatsoever

This and the previous verse seem to fall outside the scope of *karma yoga* (unitive action) by extolling a man who has no need for any activity whatsoever The Gita is only too glad to recognize the superior spiritual status of a man who can successfully transcend action merely through Self-knowledge

[19] *tasmad asaktah satatam*
karyam karma samachara
asakto hy acharan karma
param apnoti purushah

Therefore always remaining detached, engage yourself in actions that are necessary, indeed performing actions with detachment man attains to the supreme

The use of the word *tasmad* (therefore) here cannot be fully justified inasmuch as the two previous verses refer to a man who need not act Its use here can be justified only on the assumption that the two previous verses refer to exceptions to the rule by way of digression

The pressure of necessity is still active even when a man is established in Self knowledge Non ritualistic necessary actions persist in his life How to deal with them is the subject of the verses that follow Non attachment is the key for transcending all actions as suggested here

The word *karyam* (what should be done) points to the necessary character of the action involved and does not refer to any religious duty as often imagined

[20] *karmanai 'va hi samsiddhim*
asthita janakadayah
loka samgraham eva pi
sampasyan kartum arhasi

Janaka and such others reached perfection even performing acts Again, having due regard for the integration of the world too, you have to act

[21] *yad yad acharati sreshthas*
tad tad eve 'taro janah
sa yat pramanam kurute
lokas tad anuvartate

Whichever may be the way of life that a superior man may adopt, that very one is by other people too (followed) What he might make his guiding principle, the world too behaves even according to the same

Here action is regarded from a different angle It is to be done with a view to set a good example to others The ideal of a wise man who has transcended the need for being active is, according to the Gita, likely to be misunderstood, thus encouraging mere laziness and so constituting a menace to world order The rajarishi (King Seer) Janaka is cited as an example of a wise man who continues to function as a king His wisdom makes him free while he continues as if bound to normal or necessary duties As the carving on a bedstead has nothing to do with the nature of the sleep of the man on the bed, so the necessary side of life does not interfere with wisdom It is optional for a wise man to adhere or not, to necessary activity Such adherence is always permissively understood Janaka s wisdom suffered no whit because of his kingship, hence his case is mentioned

The word *lokasamgraham* (keeping the world together) does not imply any social service or uplift work of closed groups or communities It refers to human interest or welfare in a globally comprehensive sense The reference in verse 21 to the need for setting a good example to others less advanced is a commonsense argument on a par with reference to good repute in II 34 36 and can be justified as in keeping with the realism implicit in rationalism there and pragmatism here

[22] *na me partha sti kartavyam*
trishu lokeshu kimchana
na navaptam avaptavyam
varta eva cha karmani

There is nothing in the three worlds that I am obliged to do O Partha (Arjuna) nor anything unaccomplished to be accomplished while still I remain active (in principle)

[23] *yadi hy aham na varteyam*
jatu karmany atandritah
mama vartma nuvartante
manushyah partha sarvasah

If I should not remain active (in principle) never relaxing, men in every walk of life, O Partha (Arjuna), would take to my way

[24] *utsideyur ime lokā*
na kuryām karma ched aham
samkarasya cha kartā syam
upahanyām imah prajah

These (various) worlds (value systems) would fall into ruin should I refrain from activity and I would become the agent of evolutive confusion (*samkara*) killing in effect the peoples

These verses point out that even as representing the Absolute principle, Krishna is potent in his own way in human affairs The Absolute has nothing to gain but still exerts, as it were, a kind of pressure which has the effect of shaping human affairs in a certain direction

Note the word *varte* (I exist) in verse 22, which does not mean that the Absolute principle is actually active but merely that its potency is felt The same word is repeated in verse 23 Here again the meaning is that the Absolute has a certain share in shaping human affairs Direct action is not suggested What is meant might not be different from the effect of a catalytic agent in chemistry In IV, 11 the same second line of verse 23 here finds repetition, though in a converse sense Here the danger of men taking to his wrong example is referred to, if Krishna as Absolute should remain impotent

The nature of the danger implied here is made more explicit in verse 24 The absence of the pressure exerted by the Absolute in human affairs would lead to the danger here referred to as *samkara* (confusion) This does not refer to varna samkara (colour mixing) particularly, but to evolutive-involutive factors known in the Sāmkhya philosophy, which confusion would spell disaster to humanity as a whole

It is the active principle implied in the Absolute which ever reconciles opposites, bringing them together in accordance, resolving counterparts into unity The process or flux of becoming thus goes on without a break. Any gap or vacuum would be disastrous for the whole of creation and would destroy humanity

That such a unique and wholesale activity is here implied is clear from passages in the Gita such as IX, 9 10, where it is explicitly stated that the Absolute is a passive witness merely, to action

According to the Samkhya, creation itself is due to the meeting or reconciliation of reciprocal factors as between *prakriti* (nature) and *purusha* (spirit) When dealt with unitively, these two factors yield normal life. *Treated disjunctly they* bring death The former method is dynamic, the latter static The Absolute is thus the dynamic principle supporting unitive life and in this consists the unique and wholesale ' activity " of the Absolute This should not be confused with being active in the usual sense It is merely a potential principle exerting a certain direct pressure making life flow normally

The doctrine of *samkarshana* (natural attraction) in the Ramanuja school evidently is a culmination of the theory outlined above derived from Samkhya and traceable backwards even to the times of the *Tattva Samasa* or even earlier *Samkarshana* (natural attraction) results in the emergence of individual life The word *karshati* (draws) is used in the Gita (XV, 7) in more or less the same sense when it deals with the individual soul drawing to itself the senses The dualistic philosophy of the Samkhya uses the term *samkara* (mixture) in a sense repugnant to Vedanta The result of *samkara* (evolutive involutive factors) according to anterior views is a form of *vikara* (change) as when milk turns sour This presupposes an inert matter which is soulless and alone subject to transformation of this kind, without the transcendental principle having anything to do with its make up Here, however, the spirit and matter are more unitively treated

The Vedanta introduces the idea of the Eternal soul without duality, not subject to change, and in conformity with the Absolute It is in this revalued sense that Krishna, as representing the Absolute principle speaks of the ruin of the worlds and destruction of the people Mere intermarriages between differently coloured men and women would not produce so disastrous an effect as the destruction of all the worlds, even by a stretch of the imagination! To find support here for the " caste system of India would therefore detract from the grandeur of the teaching of the Gita

[25] *saktah karmany avidvamso*
yatha kurvanti bharata

kuryād vidvāms tathā 'saktas
chikirshur loka samgraham

In the same manner as people uninstructed would take to activity with attachment to work, O Bhārata (Arjuna), the instructed man likewise should act without attachment, interested (merely) in world order

Starting from verse 20 it should be noted that the rest of this chapter rambles over a variety of topics, such as setting a good example to the public, not disrupting the opinion of others, with references interspersed here and there to the pure doctrine of Krishna himself, how it is important to adopt it without carping and how, finally, *kāma-krodha* (desire-anger) or *rāgadveshau* (affection-aversion) are the twin enemies of contemplation, and recommending a certain state of immobility, rigidity or steadiness (as implied in the word *samstabhya* of verse 43 of this chapter) attaining which, Arjuna is called upon to slay—not an actual enemy in front of him—but the internal enemy in the form of desire

How all these topics which fall outside the scope of individual discipline itself, could all come under the yoga of *karma* or action, which covers, as we have already seen, even ritualistic actions, becomes next to impossible to understand in the light of orthodox notions of yoga The yoga intended here cannot therefore be the mere *chitta vritti-nirodha* (inhibition of the fluctuations of the mind) of Patanjali, or *samatvam* (equanimity), or *kaushalam* (creative or intuitive understanding) It can only refer to a generous, liberal and conciliatory attitude of mind involving a larger vision and a bolder outlook Conflicting factors, whether in public or private life have to be harmoniously co related or co-ordinated—*samanjasa* (accordance) and *samanvaya* (co-ordination) being the corresponding ideas in Sanskrit

That the Gita permits still further generosity of interpretation of the meaning of yoga is indicated in VI, 23, where yoga is defined even negatively as *dukha-samyoga viyogam* (disconnection from union with pain) In the light of all such definitions it might be permissible for us to add that yoga as intended in the Gita covers all applications of dialectical reasoning, not only to personal life but in the domain of historical necessity, and to the revaluation and restatement of religious doctrines

by which *nothing is destroyed but everything fulfilled*, as Jesus said

Such through the ages has always been the way of dialectical revaluation understood in the history of religious and philosophic thought The Gita teacher is no exception to this rule Without breaking with the past and avoiding all abrupt interference, such teachers have a way of fulfilment conducive to the happiness of humanity In so far as the revaluation is dialectical it comes under the definition of yoga Therefore the *karma yoga* (unitive action) of this chapter covers the whole range of necessity, personal or historical, and the permissive acceptance of action revalued in the light of the Absolute—which is greater than reason as the last verse states—is the subject of the chapter

Verse 25 has to be understood as being based on the idea of fulfilment as against destruction explained above The inaction of a wise man might set up wrong precedents in the social world This is to be avoided

See verse 20 for our remarks on *loka samgraham* (keeping the world together)

[26] *na buddhi bhedam janayed*
ajnanam karma sanginam
joshayet sarva karmani
vidvan yuktah samacharan

The person who is wise should not give room for disruption in the way of thinking of those who have not attained to wisdom but by behaving unitively he should render every kind of action enjoyable

The same subject is continued The yogi avoids forming an opposite camp to *karma sanginah* (those attached to action) His is a method of fulfilment, non disruptive, in the name of dialectical revaluation, which is the method proper to yoga generally

The word *joshayet* (make likeable) further clarifies the yogi s attitude This clearly says that the yogi does not acquiesce to the wrong methods of others, but only uses a gentler and more understanding method of weaning people from their wrong ways Abrupt or shock treatments as in neurotherapy are not favoured by the true yogi

[27] *prakriteh kriyamanani*
gunaih karmani sarvasah
ahamkara vimudhatma
karta 'ham iti manyate

Irrespective of the occasion it is nature that through the *gunas* (three modalities) accomplishes every act One possessed of egoism, however thinks himself as the actor

Here and in the next two verses it is explained how the individual self is not really and is incapable of being, an active agent in any item of action that it might accomplish at a given moment or place All sense of disjunct agency is discredited It is nature that acts on itself The same doctrine is treated more completely in xviii, 14 16

[28] *tatt avit tu mahabaho*
guna karma vibhagayoh
guna guneshu vartanta
iti mat a na sajjate

On the other hand O Mighty Armed (Arjuna), the one who knows the principle underlying *guna* (nature mode) as distinct from *karma* (its functional counter part) holding the view that (subjective) modes inhere in (their corresponding) objective modes, is not affected

Even nature itself is shown to have two aspects which interact without the agency of the actor who is reduced to the status of a witness He just watches the *gura* (mode) of one aspect of nature acting in accordance with its corresponding functional aspect Subjective nature (*natura naturans*) accords with objective nature (*ratura naturata*) as Spinoza understood it This is how *guna* and *guna* (mode and mode) are stated to be inhering or existing in one another here

This agreement between innate mode with its corresponding functional aspect is the basis of *chāturvarnya* (fourfold division of society) mentioned in iv 13 which we shall examine there The person who knows all these long forgotten principles is called here a *tatt a it* a knower (f true principles or of reality as such—a philosopher) The Gita here wishes to bring such

philosophy into vogue again in order to offer a solution of all conflicts that might arise in the domain of action

[29] *prakriter guna sammudhah*
sajjante guna karmasu
tan akritsnavido mai dan
kritsnavin na vichalayet

Those confounded by the modalities (*gunas*) of nature become attached to objective modalities existing in works Such men who are not all wise and are dull *should not be unsettled by those who are all wise*

This verse repeats the idea of verse 26 in a more philo sophical fashion It takes account of all contingent modes objective and subjective Ordinary persons eke out their liveli hood by stabilizing themselves in some fixed social station or kind of occupation in life Such occupations are endless in variety Dislodging them from their settled ways even through the teaching of purer or truer doctrines might have the effect of uprooting them without establ shing them again in stability, which would result in psychological or sociological maladjust ments A little knowledge in such matters is dangerous It would be safe to leave common people unsophisticated in such matters The evil resulting from such interference is sufficiently clear from the turn that caste doctrines have taken in India

Dislodgement through philosophy results in the large num ber of religious misfits that we find everywhere especially in India The implication of this verse has to be understood side by side with verse 35 which refers to *svadharma* (conduct according to one s own nature) If politically displaced persons constitute an international problem rel gious philosophical or psychic misfits constitute perhaps an even more serious prob lem for the world Proper co ordination and orientation in such matters is of great importance

[30] *mayi sarvani karmani*
samnyasya dhyatmachetasa
nirasir n rmamo bhutva
yudhyasva vigatajvarah

Renouncing in Me (the Absolute) all works coming to be without expectations or possess veness with a

full awareness about the Self, do fight with fever gone

In all these matters of fulfilment and non-interference which we have referred to, a certain neutrality has to be maintained, combined with generosity Such would be guaranteed only if the Absolute was kept in mind The mental fever is cured when the spirit is in tune with the Absolute The yogic state thus becomes accomplished when necessary actions are permitted to go on unhindered all the while

The word *yudhyasva* (fight) should be interpreted as permissive and not mandatory as we have explained already The Absolute is here both *Brahman* (Absolute principle) and *atma* (Self) without distinction The nature of the fever referred to here must be because of its origin in *kama* (desire) which is an extraneous or third factor and the enemy of contemplation, as already indicated

[31] *ye me matam idam nityam*
anutishthanti manavah
sraddhavanto 'nasuyanto
muchyante te 'pi karmabhih

They too, who ever adhere to this doctrine of mine, men full of faith and free from any mistrust in respect of it, they gain release from works

[32] *ye tv etad abhyasuyanto*
na 'nutishthanti me matam
sarvajnana vimudhams tan
viddhi nashtan achetasah

On the other hand, those soulless ones who look upon this my doctrine with mistrust and adhere not to it, know them as shut away from all knowledge and as lost

These verses indicate that Krishna's teaching had some strangeness even in the days of Vyāsa's composition People questioned his revaluation of ritualism and of action Krishna here affirms his strong stand on his revalued teaching

The word *anasuyantah* (those who do not envy, cavil or disadopt) of verse 31 pleads for a sympathetic hearing of the

new doctrine The same attitude of *asuya* repeated in verse 32 condemns disadoption of the teaching more vehemently In effect it calls disadopters utter fools, even fated to be destroyed It is reminiscent of "ye generation of vipers" in the Bible No teaching of any profound doctrine is possible when there is disadoption between the teacher and the taught

[33] *sadrisam cheshtate svasyah*
prakriter jnanavan api
prakritim yanti bhutāni
nigrahah kim karishyati

Even a man of wisdom behaves in conformity with his own nature All creation goes on subject to nature Of what avail is control?

At first it seems as if self control is of no avail Everything is in the hands of nature Even a wise man is a tool in its hands

True, there is an imperative urge in one's own nature which is categorical and overpowering But to say there is nothing to control at all is to misunderstand the import of this verse, an import often missed when torn from its context when it then seems to support licentiousness But taken with the next verse such a misinterpretation is precluded

In fact there are two sets of urges in human nature, a deep seated volume of tendencies surging upwards for expressive translation into action at every moment, and an urge which is secondary in its nature and far less categorically imperative, and which is capable of being subjected to intelligent control

The latter tendency, which may be said to have its being and action on the horizontal plane, has the form of attraction repulsion referred to in verse 34 This form is always *dvandva* (relativistically double) like heat and cold, pleasure and pain

The former is a steady pressure of the *elan vital* (vital spirit) of Bergson, of pure life itself which alone is beyond our control, unlike the former This pressure is shared in common with all life, as the word *bhutani* (beings) indicates

[34] *indriyasye 'ndriyasyā 'rthe*
raga dveshau vyavasthitau

tayor na vasam agachchhet
tau hy asya paripanthinau

Attraction repulsion abide mutually as between the senses and their sense objects One should never come under their (double) sway They indeed are one s (twin) path hindering factors

The double specific reference to (1) the subjective *indriya* (sense) and (2) to the particularized object *indriyasyarthe* (a specified sense object) is significant, enabling the proper contrast between the two sets of tendencies, one general and the other of a lower mechanistic order, implied in the last verse and here in this verse respectively, to be made unmistakably clear Here it is a partial attachment, not a wholesale one, as in the previous verse where the whole nervous system is involved in the urge of pure nature The relation might be brought out by the analogy of an electric current and the secondary magnetic field that goes with it Attachment of the second order here is relativistic and has its opposite, while the former, referring to the pure life urge, belongs to the order of the categorical imperative of Kant which is a pure absolutist notion, where opposing pairs such as attachment and repulsion mentioned here are not present

All pairs of relative opposites are covered by the dual case ending of the word *paripanthinau* (twin obstructors of the path) Transcending duality is the task of the yogi and not the stifling or repression of life itself which, in the previous verse is stated to be futile Life must be given its free scope to stabilize itself naturally in the environment that already goes with it This leads us naturally to the much misunderstood subject of *svadharma* (one s own proper activity) of the next verse

[35] *sreyan svadharmo vigunah*
paradharmat svanushthitat
svadharme nidh nam sreyah
paradharmo bhayavahah

Better is activity rightly conforming to one s own nature though lacking in superior quality than activity foreign to one s own nature although it may be well done (otherwise) (Even) death by the

performance of what fits one properly has merit Activity foreign to oneself is fraught with danger

The famous doctrine of *svadharma* (conduct proper to one s nature), which is too easily interpreted by interested people as supporting a strict adherence to the artificial divisions of caste, has to be understood properly as intended, as a doctrine in keeping with the rest of the Gita

We have referred to Aristotle s *Nichomachean Ethics* where the foundation of virtue consists in conforming to the specific or unique qualities of each individual kind of life The virtue of a coconut tree is judged by the nuts it yields It should not, and cannot, try to yield say mangoes In the human context the same law of *svadharma* (conduct proper to one s own nature) holds true in the sense that one man s meat is another man s poison In needs and capacity each man is unique and this unique specific quality is to be respected Taking Arjuna s own case as the clearest possible example, if he should shave his head and become a *sannyasin* (renouncer) as he hinted to Krishna, that would constitute a deflection from his path of *svadharma* One animal cannot be fed on the food of another kind of animal when its own inside revolts against it An artificial role that a man might play if incompatible with his own background would be fraught with danger If a country yokel pretended to be a traffic policeman at Charing Cross without proper training and uniform we can imagine the disastrous consequences Such is the danger referred to in the phrase *paradharmo bhayavahah* (another s duty is fraught with danger) It does not mean that a carpenter s son should never aspire to become a lawyer just because he has inherited the tools of the carpenter In fact such or similar interpretations are read into this verse by ingenious persons

The phrase *paradharmat svanushthitat* (another s duty well-performed) calls for explanation A tonic can be good if there is the corresponding weakness in the man who uses it but even a good tonic might do harm when it does not agree with the history of the case A woman s broad brimmed summer hat might not suit a short stout lady although it seems wonderful to her when seen in the shop by itself Or a man unhappily married might be said to be worse off than one unmarried

A unitive treatment of the past and the future of an individual conducive to organic development of the personality is therefore the theory implied in this phrase

The words *svadharme nidhanam sreyah* (death in one's own way of life is superior in merit) contain an idea too drastic when we think of ordinary occupations in life. One has to be truthful to oneself if spirituality is to accrue in one's favour. One cannot then be false to any man. This is a law of life known to Shakespeare. The inner truthfulness of a man has to correspond to his outer truthfulness. Otherwise a conflict would develop which would stultify his spiritual progress, finally blocking it altogether. This would amount to spiritual death, much more serious than just physical death, which would affect only the present life. One has to avoid by all means entering into conflict with oneself. Each man has to work out his own salvation, according to his own intelligence or capacity. While another man can carry a physical burden, vicarious suffering cannot be applied to the domain of precious inner values. Truth to oneself can never result in madness which would be worse than death.

To return to Arjuna's own case: he himself tried experiments in the life of a *samnyāsin* (renunciator) or recluse wandering in the forest, the failure of which was known to Krishna, Arjuna having married Subhadra, Krishna's sister. Truth is not a question of experiment. Dedication to truth has to be complete, involving a fervour which looks upon death as a triviality. Absolute truth knows no compromise.

Svadharma (conduct proper to one's own nature) here refers to the whole of life as explained under verse 34, and not the partial attachment to a vocation. Tragic heroes and martyrs, though possibly sometimes perverted, at least took certain life-values seriously. Free from perversions, they would be of the stuff of true heroism. Contemplation has its heroes too in a more thorough or absolute sense. The keenness of the life-long torture of *paradharma* (a way of living strange to one's proper nature) would be worse than sudden death by lightning.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO VERSES 36 to 43

Beginning with a fresh question by Arjuna, the remaining verses are meant to sum up, as it were, the findings of this chapter.

Orthodox notions of *karma yoga* (unitive action), as popularly understood and much talked-about, are strangely enough

outside the scope of this chapter altogether All wilful popular demagogues are too easily called *karma yogis* (contemplatives in action) But as long as there could be the possibility of rivalry between such *karma yogis* they should not be considered yogis at all The *lokasamgraham* (keeping the world together) of verse 20 is quite the opposite of loyalty to closed or static patriotisms or ideologies, pertaining to countries or particular traditions Action itself as it is derived from *rajoguna* (quality of passion) is something to be ashamed of, having desire as its direct and anger as its indirect products as stated in verses 38 and 39

Verse 40 states that the seat of such action, which is to be avoided, is in the senses the mind and reason, as understood in Chapter II Transcending such a thing of sin is recommended in verse 41

But then it might be asked what about *svadharma* (conduct proper to one s own nature) held to be so precious in this chapter? Such conduct does not lie in the same plane or axis in which the three the senses mind and reason lie It lives and moves on another plane or axis altogether, as we have indicated under verse 34 of this chapter

The subtle instruction regarding the right method of transcending the lure of the senses and establishing oneself in yoga has been indicated in III, 7 The same subject is continued in verse 42

The afferent tendencies of the *indriyas* (senses) have a new *orientation facing inwards The senses thus attain a new status* and, starting with them as instruments the final triumph of *karma yoga* (unitive action) is indicated in verses 42 and 43

Arjuna uvacha

[36] *atha kena prayukto yam*
papam charati purushah
anichchhann api varshneya
balad iva niyojitah

Arjuna said
Then impelled by what does man lead such a life of sin even against his will O Varshneya (Krishna), as if forcibly enjoined?

The word *anichchhann* (not wanting to) shows there is in nature itself a penchant to do evil Such an inclination is not

different from theological concupiscence mentioned under II, 67 This is to indicate the necessity for actively countering evil Contemplation is a form of ascent of Mount Carmel as St John of the Cross would call it

Sribhagavan uvacha

[37] *kama esha krodha esha*
rajoguna samudbhavah
mahasano mahapapma
viddhy enam iha vairinam

Krishna said

Such is desire, such is anger, born out of the modality (*guna*) called active, affective (*rajas*), all devouring, all vitiating, know this to be the enemy here

The reference here to *rajoguna* (modality of passion) has to be understood in relation to action which is the subject of this chapter *Rajas* (passion) is always known as *kriyatmika* (having the character of activity) That aspect of outgoing activity or energy which fixes its attention on particular desirable objects as referred to in verse 34 is here to be distinguished from life activity in general which moves on another plane altogether, and which perforce must work itself out, just because it is beyond control

The horizontal tendencies to activity taken as a whole are under reference here—hence the epithets *mahasano* (all devouring) and *mahapapma* (all unholy *or* all sinful) are justified Such tendencies continue to characterise our life here throughout and their propensity as a whole has to be effectively countered

Kama (desire) and *krodha* (anger) are inter related as mentioned under II, 62 Note here that *tamas* (modality of darkness) and *sattva* (modality of purity or truth) are not taken as active enemies of contemplation

[38] *dhumena triyate vahnir*
yatha darso malena cha
yatho lbena 'vrito garbhas
tatha tene 'dam avritam

As smoke shrouds fire, as a mirror (is beclouded) by dirt, as the foetus is enclosed in the amnion, likewise by such is This surrounded

Note that *kama* (desire), *krodha* (anger) and *rajas* (modality of passion) are treated as if they were interchangeable terms the first two originating in the third The horizontal tendencies that each of these three stands for in l fe are here treated as together constituting a factor which is negative in character, hindering the contemplative life, which is the good life of the Gita The examples of smoke, dust and the amnion are all meant to show the subtle inter relationship between the two sets of life activities *i e*, those which must be left free and those which are to be suppressed

Idam (this) here refers to the spirit of man which seeks freedom Note that the fire analogy of the last verse is not applied here to desire but to the pure spirit This points to the subtle bi polar relationship we have referred to This here, which is the spirit of man has two aspects one of which is here its own enemy

[39] *avritam jnanam etena*
jnanino nityavairina
kamarupena kaunteya
dushpurena nalena cha

Wisdom is enveloped by this which is the eternal enemy of the wise remaining in the form of desire, O Kaunteya (Arjuna) which is a fire too that is difficult to satiate

The word *nityavairina* (ever present enemy) points to the problem of evil which in a certain sense is also eternal Desire is the root where evil is located finally in most generalized terms We cannot fight individual desires but we can oppose all desires together by a reorientation of the spirit

The force of the word *cha* (and) *which as we have said* before is very important for the dialectical treatment of the subject and a peculiarity of the style of the Gita is missed by most translators

There is a fire of desire and there is a fire of l fe of the spirit or soul Both these fires have to be brought together for purposes of true dialectical contemplation The opposites cancel themselves in the neutrality which is of the essence of yoga This verse is meant to give equal and opposite status to this eternal enemy by the side of the Self who is one s own friend as referred to in VI 5 and 6 When we realise that the

fire of desire is ever present and is never to be one sidedly satisfied, then the discussion attains the status of a yoga as understood throughout the Gita—this yoga being a neutrality between opposites

How the whole chapter comes under the subject of yoga is finally justified and rounded off in this verse where necessary action is represented by one fire and contingent action by the other fire, and both considered eternal Thus viewed, the definition of yoga of II, 48—*samatvam* (equanimity)—applies to this chapter in spite of the rambling character of the latter half

[40] *indriyani mano buddhir*
asya 'dhishthanam uchyate
etair vimohayaty esha
jnanam avritya dehinam

This is said to be lodged in the senses, mind and in reason By means of these, this (desire) bewilders the embodied one by veiling his wisdom

The word *adhishthanam* (seat) here is related to the same word used in XVIII, 14 and is a technical term of the Samkhya philosophy The intelligent principle that the *purusha* (spirit) represents in Samkhya is foreign to this *adhishthanam* (seat) which is on the side of *prakriti* (nature) Here, however, we note that *buddhi* (reasoning) is put on the side of nature This lower reason is to be transcended if the absolutist Self is to be attained as shown in verse 43 The Gita accepts Samkhya epistemology and builds on it the notion of the unitive Absolute as its own contribution The epistemological framework is retained untouched Bewilderment continues and duality is retained only until the unitive Self becomes established

[41] *tasmat tvam indriyany adau*
niyamya bharatarshabha
papmanam prajahi hy enam
jnana vijnana nasanam

Therefore, O best of Bharatas (Arjuna), mastering first the senses, slay this which is of sin which can destroy both pure and practical wisdom

The subject of controlling the senses is again discussed Just as it is easier to close a door by the handle than on the part where it is hinged the senses lend themselves more easily to control than desire or activity taken as a whole In other words we can turn the senses away from their objects voluntarily We cannot stifle desire as a whole hence the technical advice given here to start *adau* (first) with controlling the senses The same method has been recommended once before (see III 7)

Desire has to be split up into its elementary components in the senses before its disastrous effects could be stemmed Desire compromises *jnana* (pure wisdom) and *vijnana* (practical wisdom) the latter comprising the *savoir faire* of the former Yoga is both pure and practical The same pair is referred to again in VI 8 IX 1 and XVIII 42 The Gita does not treat merely of pure philosophy as academically understood in the West nor does it leave out practical indications pertaining to spiritual life which form so integral a part of yoga as a non academic discipline

The confusion in the minds of both Westerners and Indians regarding the class of literature to which the Gita properly belongs is due to this treatment of *jnana* (pure wisdom) and *vijnana* (practical wisdom) together throughout this *sastra* (textbook) The scene of the battlefield is expressly chosen by Vyasa to lend itself to such a parallel treatment of pure and practical aspects of wisdom The slightest affiliation to sense objects jeopardises both aspects of wisdom by confusing the mind as described in II 67

[42] *indriyani parany ahur*
indriyebhyah param manah
manasas tu para buddhir
yo buddheh paratas tu sah

It is taught (in ancient trad tion) that the senses are beyond (transcendental) beyond the senses is the mind beyond the mind is reason and beyond reason is He (the Absolute)

Here those factors conducive to contemplation are enumerated in an ascending order without omitting even the senses which are also qualif ed by the epithet *parani* (great or superior) After being spiritually reoriented they attain this superior status.

The word *ahuh* (they say) evidently refers to the immemorial undercurrent of tradition which is the basis of the Kapila system proper, to which the unitive treatment of *purusha* (spirit) and *prakriti* (nature) in terms of the Absolute is not altogether strange *Sah* (He), which corresponds to the *purusha* (spirit) of the Samkhya, brings the subject of contemplation as near as possible to the Absolute Self implicit in the next verse, where even the *purusha* (spirit) of this verse may be said to be, in principle, transcended

The duality between *purusha* (spirit) and *prakriti* (nature) implied in the Samkhya system of Kapila is here glided over, and a steady and progressive gradation maintained between the various factors, giving no room to the processes of *samkara* (evolution) and *pratisamkara* (involution) which should have been implied if Samkhya duality had been accepted by the Gita *Purusha* (spirit) is no more a lame man depending on the help of a blind man with proper limbs, which is the usual metaphor of the Samkhya philosophers to describe the relation between spirit and nature (see Īshvara Krishna's *Samkhya Karikā*, 21, "For the spirit's contemplation of nature and for its final separation the union of both takes place, as of the lame man and the blind man By that union a creation is formed") *Purusha* (spirit) is now the unitive representative of the Absolute Herein lies the revaluation of the Gita

[43] *evam buddheh param buddhvā*
samstabhya 'tmānam atmana
jahi satrum mahabaho
kamarupam durasadam

Thus knowing Him to be beyond reason, immobilizing the Self by the Self, O Mighty-Armed (Arjuna), kill that enemy in the form of desire (so) difficult to encounter

Here the battlefield itself as also the actual exterior enemy is forgotten, and as if with the closed eyes of introspection, the call to Arjuna here merely consists of conquering the Self by the Self with a certain immobility as implied in the word *samstabhya* explained already under verse 25

Desire which tends to flow outwards is to be made to flow in the reverse, as implied in II, 70

Karma Yoga (unitive action) in popular Vedanta literature, lapses into a trite picture of a man who is offering all actions prayerfully to the lotus feet of the Lord In the light of the contents of this chapter which we have examined in all its critical and philosophical implications, such a pious and holy version of *karma yoga* is, to say the least, puerile Much eloquence is often wasted by religious enthusiasts in the cause of such piety God does not eat the fruits offered to him It is the priest or the worshipper himself who finally gobbles them up, and to speak of offering to God the fruits of action which seems to follow close on this imagery, does not make any meaning at all The whole purport of the Gita as a critical study, full of precise definitions and enumerations belonging to an exact or positive science, and not to a sentimental theism, would be completely and sadly compromised

ity srimad bhagavadgitasupanishatsu brahmavidyayam
yogasastre srikrishnarjunasamvade
karmayogo nama tritiyo 'dhyayah

Thus ends in the Upanishads of the Songs of God, in the Science of the Wisdom of the Absolute, in the Dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, the third chapter entitled Unitive Action

CHAPTER IV

UNITIVE WISDOM

Jnana Yoga

THIS chapter entitled Unitive Wisdom treats of a multiplicity of topics which at first sight do not seem to have any unitive coherence This general title, however, is sometimes further qualified as *jnana vibhaga yoga* (yoga of wisdom section) or even as *jnana karma samnyasa yoga* (yoga of Knowledge, Action and Renunciation) These different titles are sufficient to show that the unity underlying this chapter has to do with something elusive and subtle with regard to *brahma vidya* (science of the Absolute) which must be the wisdom referred to

Hitherto, in the first chapter, it was Arjuna's conflict which was brought under the discipline of contemplation In the second chapter Samkhya and Yoga as they existed in separate schools of thought were unitively treated, and in the third chapter the whole question of *karma* (action) was relegated to the necessary aspect of spiritual life, while Arjuna was asked to transcend its evil by focussing his attention on something greater than reason

The present chapter must be looked upon, naturally, as continuing the same subject of reason or wisdom, to the specification of whose exact nature the Gita arrived at the end of the last chapter An important aspect of wisdom, as it is to be understood in the Gita, is left over, to be made more explicit here This pertains to its character as a dialectical growth of perennial wisdom The time and duration element entering into the subject of wisdom is a kind of fourth dimension without which its complete and true nature would be only partially understood A dynamic rather than a static view of wisdom is implied here

This present fourth discourse therefore refers first to the timelessness or perennial nature of the wisdom, taking it completely out of historical or even geographical limitations The reference to ' divine incarnation " so much spoken of, occurs incidentally in this first section of the chapter We have to grasp its implications clearly from this chapter

The discussion then passes on to the question of the fourfold divisions in society Next, the subject is of understanding the true nature of action itself, which it says is very subtle and problematic, except when understood in the light of yoga (dialectic)

From this the discussion passes on to the examination of the various varieties of spiritual practices extant in the India of the time of the writing of the Gita, such as burnt sacrifices, breathing exercises, etc These are disposed of in a graded fashion, culminating in a crowning discipline which comprises them all under *brahmavidya* (science of the Absolute), or Self-realization, which is always the theme of the Gita

This chapter therefore aptly closes with unqualified praise for wisdom which, like a fire, should burn all the dross of action or practice of any kind The sword of wisdom has to cleave asunder all doubts Such is the nature of the triumph of wisdom as depicted in the closing verses of this chapter Action as usually understood is completely discredited here although a respect for the more profound and deeper-seated eternally necessary urge for positive living is still retained

The word *samnyasa* which occurs in verse 41 rounds off the nature of the discipline in relation to renunciation which, however, is not just vacuous abandonment leaving emptiness, but to be understood as a life lived in the fresh breezes of yoga, where all the conflicting factors referred to in this chapter are brought into a unity of understanding The unity or yoga of this chapter therefore lies in its treatment of wisdom as a perennial way of life, in keeping with the science of the Absolute

Sribhagavan uvacha

[1] *imam vivasvate yogam*
proktavan aham avyayam
vivasvan manave praha
manur ikshvakave 'bravit

Krishna said
This perennial unitive wisdom (yoga) did I declare to Vivasvan (the Sun), Vivasvan taught it to Manu (law giver) and Manu told it to Ikshvaku (first king of the solar race)

This verse begins the section which, up to verse 10, deals with the nature of perennial wisdom In the first place this wisdom is timeless, *i e*, it could be said to be more ancient than the most ancient Vivasvan, who is the personification of the Sun, representing the first created being, is supposed to have learned this wisdom from *brahman* (the Absolute) itself or from Brahma the creator of the Indian pantheon as some (*e g*, Sankara) prefer to put it. All that is to be inferred here is that the science of the Absolute is timeless Manu learns this science from the Sun and passes it on to Ikshvaku Manu is a law giver of antiquity who supports the fourfold division of society Although there are many Manus or lawgivers—four being mentioned in the Gita in x, 6—they are all generically implied in the reference Ikshvaku is the first ruler whose influence on enforcing the law is more direct, as representing the first sceptred monarch

How wisdom thus touches the life of the people at large is meant to be indicated here What is further meant becomes clear from the next verse, where the word *parampara* (vertical hierarchical succession of wisdom teachers) occurs Perennial wisdom is always handed down from generation to generation vertically, down the narrow corridors of time, and is thus kept alive, although often the torch is extinguished, to await the fresh torch bearer who will light it and brighten the darkness, as vividly portrayed in this section

The words *imam* (this) and *yoga* indicate specific reference to the type of philosophy described in the previous chapters An attempt to revaluate and restate yoga in a manner in keeping with its perennial ancient and absolute nature was made in these introductory chapters, the subject being of a very subtle character

Avyayam (imperishable) stresses the fact that human life could not be without this precious heritage, though it sometimes apparently is endangered or forgotten

The reference to the commencement of creation by Sankara in his comment on this verse, and his support of the idea of strengthening the Brahmin caste for the welfare of the world is too naif to appeal to the modern mind, especially in the light of the fact that according to *Manusmriti* (Law Code of Manu), a Brahmin could even take away by force the land belonging to a Shudra (see *Laws of Manu*, viii, v 417, transl G Buhler—*Sacred Books of the East*, p 327), not to speak of other illegal privileges which have been so misinterpreted

and misapplied as to be recognized as a blot on Indian civilization itself The evils of such doctrines in the hands of dictators can be easily imagined It leaves no doubt in the mind of modern man, especially of India, that extreme forms of injustice could thrive under the shadow of such naif theological or *purana* (legendary) interpretations All that should be extracted reasonably from this verse is that this yoga is a timeless precious heritage of all mankind Sankara's anxiety to stabilize the Hinduism of his time by linking it up with Vedic orthodoxy (though himself a supporter of thoroughgoing *mayā vada* [doctrine of appearance] and *ajata vada* [doctrine of non creation]) could be the only reason which would explain such an interpretation as he gives here

The Gita is not to be and should not be considered a textbook of Hindu orthodoxy for present day humanity Hence the broader interpretation we have given is recommended to the reader Moreover to mix up religion or obligatory aspects of a *dharma-sastra* (conduct textbook) with the Gita would be repugnant to its whole spirit as we have had much occasion to point out

[2] *evam paramparapraptam*
imam rajarshayo viduh
sa kalene ha mahata
yogo nashtah paramtapa

Thus handed down the line in succession, this (wisdom) the king sages (raja rishis) understood, by great lapse of time here (however) this unitive wisdom (yoga) came to be lost, O Paramtapa (Arjuna)

The reference to *rajarshayah* (royal sages) as belonging to the direct line of representatives of perennial wisdom, has its own significance We find in the Upanishads that warriors or kings (i e, kshatriyas) were the custodians of this kind of wisdom or yoga (see *Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad*, II, 1, 15, *Chandogya Upanishad* v, III 7) In the light of the Gita (III, 20) where Janaka is referred to by name, and the general reflection of discredit on the merely Vedic point of view in several parts of the Gita (II 42 46) it is unmistakable that the yoga which Krishna here bewails as being lost by the efflux of time is a particular way of life belonging to the Upanishads It is of the nature of a profound secret Its affiliations are not

directly with orthodox Vedism, but one which is neither orthodox nor heterodox, one which is both rational and religious at the same time, in the same way as samkhya and yoga have to be understood according to the Gita v, 5

Vedic and Brihaspati traditions taken together have that perennial character of the yoga which must be the yoga meant by Krishna in this verse It is this subtle harmonized teaching which tends to be lost again and again, and not rigid orthodoxy which, as we know, endures to the present day as Brahminism The *rajarshaya* (royal sages) of the model of Janaka, must have been such enlightened rulers of India who may have belonged even to the pre Aryan or pre Vedic context and who, it might even be legitimate to suppose, were capable of absorbing elements of Vedism into the revalued wisdom which they represented

Thus revalued time and again, as the Gita itself does here, perennial philosophy may be said to have survived to our own day Thanks to gurus such as Sankara and Narayana wisdom has been correctly represented, revalued and restated once perhaps in a thousand years Thus this heritage survives Representatives of absolute Wisdom are few and far between, as the Gita declares or hints in iv, 8

Turning back to the relativist Veda as being the basis of this subtle philosophy (as some orthodox thinkers tend to do) would be wrong As we know, crude orthodoxy has never been in any danger of being lost, and therefore this verse cannot apply to it In what sense then, is there the possibility of yoga being lost? When the perennial tradition becomes overcovered by other non absolutist modes and values influencing human life, and it is in this same sense that we must interpret verses 7 and 8 which follow

[3] *sa eva 'yam maya te 'dya*
yogah proktah puratanah
bhakto 'si me sakha che 'ti
rahasyam hy etad uttamam

That very same ancient secret is being today declared to you by me, seeing that you are both my devotee and friend

This verse underlines further the perennial nature of the wisdom called yoga here It is ancient, a supreme secret, and

it is being disclosed now as ever (*adya*, today, *puratanah*, ancient, *rahasyam*, secret, and *uttamam*, supreme) This view brings out further the need for a bi polar Guru Sishya (teacher-disciple) relationship for such a wisdom to survive The words *bhakta* (devotee, adorer) and *sakha* (friend) are meant to mark out the intimacy which is always understood to be the prerequisite for the flow of such wisdom

Arjuna uvacha

[4] *aparam bhavato janma*
param janma vivasvatah
katham etad vijaniyam
tvam adau proktavan iti

Arjuna said
Your birth it was posterior and the birth of Vivasvān that was anterior, how then have I to understand it that you declared it in the beginning?

Arjuna's historical prejudices regarding the doctrine of perennial philosophy are stated here The succession of actual events in historical duration is of no import as far as the subtle doctrine referred to here is concerned Historical time is relativist in its character The Absolute, however, lives and speaks, as it were, in the eternal present or now The question of priority or succession of births is therefore to be ruled out by Krishna in the reply that follows That the particular incarnation of Krishna as Vasudeva is not to be taken seriously is indicated also in the reply to the question To speak in terms of actual *avatars* (descending manifestations of divinity) would be tolerable only if the Gita is considered a *purana* or *itihāsa* (religious legend) such as the *Vishnu Purana* and not a *śāstra* (exact scientific text) as the Gita is evidently intended to be Among the ten *avataras* of Vishnu, the eighth one who is Krishna, "the Dark One , as Monier Williams says, "is held by the Vaishnavas to be not so much an incarnation of Vishnu as the very essence of Vishnu, or rather Vishnu himself, so that the Balarama incarnation which is sometimes mixed up with this eighth *avatara* is also occasionally substituted for it" Prof O Lacombe also remarks 'The identification (of Vishnu) with Nārāyana and with Vāsudeva took place at an epic period posteriorly to the composition of the

Gita' (translated fn p 26, *L'Absolu selon le Vedanta*, Paris, 1937)

Sribhagavan uvacha

[5] *bahuni me vyatitani*
janmani tava cha rjuna
tany aham veda sarvani
na tvam vettha paramtapa

Krishna said
Many are the lives that have gone past for me as also for you O Arjuna I am conscious of them all, you, O Paramtapa (Arjuna), are not conscious of them

The question of reincarnation is again brought in Between the extremes of life eternal and the continuous process of alternating births and deaths what is called the theory of reincarnation has to be understood according to its own proper context when it occurs in the text. The reference here to many births instead of to one eternal life should therefore be treated as one of the possible ways of thinking of reincarnation In the case of Arjuna the many births are kept disjunct by a certain capacity of memory, while in the case of Krishna who represents the absolute perennial value in him self, the relation between successive births is transparent, and these births form or tend to become one whole life eternal Fuller discussion of reincarnation as understood in the Gita is reserved till xv, 8 11

[6] *ajo pi sann avyayatma*
bhutanam isvaro pi san
prakritim svam adhishthaya
sambhavamy atmamayaya

Although (I remain) ever unborn as the never diminishing Self while I am the Lord of creation too, grounded on my own nature I assume being through the negative principle (*maya*) of my own Self

The same subject is viewed here from a different angle, as when a man when lying under water would look at the

sunlight above It is in the blurred light of relativism that manifestations of the Absolute are here viewed The difference between the two standpoints of verses 5 and 6 will become clearer in the two verses 7 and 8 which follow There could be a "descent" (*avatarana*) of the divine or manifestation could take the form of an "ascent into existence," as implied in the phrase *sambhavam* (I become) used here The distinction is rather subtle and one has to be familiar with the epistemology of Vedānta, where inorganic nature (elements) and organic nature (souls) have two different or even opposite origins This matter has received close attention by Prof Paul Deussen in his book *Das System des Vedanta* These two lines of manifestation take place, as it were, from opposite poles resulting in the *nāma rupa-krita kārya-karana-sanghata* (complex whole of instruments and action under names and forms) which is the embodied person of Vedānta proper For further elaboration of this theory one must refer to Sankara's *Vedanta-Sara* where the theory of *panchi-karana* (five-principled interlocking of gross and subtle elements for purposes of manifestation of the body) is fully discussed In the rationalist schools of Samkhya incarnation takes place in subtle ways too numerous to review here However, as Deussen himself points out, a certain vagueness persists which we shall try to clarify as far as possible

The word *maya* (appearance) belongs naturally to Vedanta proper, while the word *srij* (send forth or down) of verse 7 has to be traced back to such references of the Upanishads where Brahman first creates nature and then enters into it (see *Taittiriya Upanishad*, ii, 6) *Mayā* (appearance) can imply an *Isvara* (Lord) who is both under the influence of relativism and above as presiding over all creation The world is unreal when *maya* is accepted, but an *avatar* (descent of divinity in manifestation) who is created out of nature has to be real The conflicting epistemologies implied here would legitimately form the subject of a study in itself, which for the present we must defer till the problem faces us more squarely. Aspects of the same problem are developed in xv, 8-11

Prakriti (nature) is also treated indifferently as a sort of co-partner with the principle of *mayā* (appearance) Both these factors impose their respective conditionings resulting in *isvaratva* (lordship) or *atmatva* (Selfhood) of the Absolute, as described in this verse A favourite example of the "conditioning" of the Absolute in this manner is the transparent

crystal placed on red silk which makes it seem red itself, though not actually so

The incarnation or manifestation of God referred to in this chapter should therefore be understood in a manner in keeping with these theoretical considerations The picture of an *avatār* here coming down to punish the wicked and save the good should not be taken too realistically or even mythologically, but, rid of its crude puerile nature as belonging properly to a science of contemplation Cruder minds will, of course, require such satisfaction

[7] *yadā-yada hi dharmasya*
glanir bhavati bhārata
abhyutthānam adharmasya
tadā 'tmanam srijamy aham

Whenever there comes to be laxity in regard to right life (*dharma*) O Bharata (Arjuna), and wrong coming to assert itself, then I bring about the creation of myself

[8] *paritranaya sādhūnām*
vinasāya cha dushkritām
dharma samsthapanarthaya
sambhavami yuge-yuge

To protect those who are good and to destroy evildoers, for establishing righteousness, I assume being, age by age

The expression *dharmasya glanih* (loss in the strength of what is naturally right) should not be too easily construed, as has been done often, to mean a decline in the standard of social duties such as caste, or as a decay in outward morality. A megalomaniac dictator can easily assume the role of a chosen man who is to kill or liquidate the wicked according to his own notions Any demagogue can feel virtuous if the meaning of these verses is interpreted as referring to the social conditions of a particular part of the world. *Dharma* (right conduct according with nature) like *guna* (property) has both its vertical and horizontal component parts, as we have tried to distinguish under III, 28 *Dharma* here should be understood as *svadharma* (one's own natural sense of right)

and then the word *glanih* (weakening, decay) would mean just lack of faith, certainty or understanding of what is in keeping with one's own specific nature in which, as we have said, virtue consists

This phrase does not therefore mean so much the decline of a particular faith or of a civilization, but faithlessness generally in individuals the world over, as is perhaps the case at present when all absolutist norms seem to be abandoned in despair by humanity as a whole, and when the old order is ready to change, "yielding place to new" as Tennyson puts it

The expression *abhyuththānam adharmasya* (standing up for or assertion of what is foreign to true nature) refers to a situation as when humanity is regimented or conscripted into forced labour or warfare, stifling its natural expression, which cuts across the precious values which the individual needs to work out or express in life in a natural way in keeping with a life of freedom in the Absolute

Then the time is ripe for the absolutist pattern of life to assert itself by sheer necessity combined with the chance element which makes humanity balance itself again somehow. It is then that persons who represent absolutist universal values in themselves gain a status as saviours of humanity They may be called incarnations, or even *avatars* in popular language This phenomenon is familiar to us in the spiritual history of the world, when a Buddha or Christ lives and moves among men

Such an eventuality is not an everyday occurrence It happens once in a *yuga* (age), periods in Indian mythology separated by deluges, in each of which certain norms and standards prevail generally *Yuga* (epoch) has to be understood in the light of viii, 17 and 18, where a larger scheme of being is envisaged, which is a better fitting domain for the Absolute to live, move or function

These two verses have suffered from too hackneyed a usage by platform orators when they are inclined to hero worship Leaders of closed groups, however historically important they may be, cannot lay any legitimate claim to be representatives of the Absolute in the sense intended in the Gita here. To confuse the two would be a fatal error

The phrase *dharma samsthapanarthāya* (for the purpose of firmly establishing what is right) should be understood in the same light. If universal standards applicable to the whole

of humanity are not intended by the word *dharma*, the personalized manifestation would be a partial one, and would result in disastrous consequences for humanity, giving room for rivalry in ideology and creeds

On close examination of these verses we find that what is stated in verse 7, where the word *srija* (emanate) occurs, is not the same as stated in verse 8 where the phrase *sambhavami* (I become) is used The opposition between the two has just been explained under verse 6 To say, as has often been stated, that there is a reference to Krishna as an *avatar* in the Gita would be wrong The word *avatār* does not occur in the Gita at all It is foreign to the spirit in which the Gita is written, in which both ascent and descent are equally implied and cancelled against each other in the neutrality of the Absolute

[9] *janma karma cha me divyam*
evam yo vetti tattvatah
tyaktvā deham punarjanma
nai 'ti mam eti so 'rjuna

He who understands this divine nature of my birth and work consistently with basic principles, on leaving this body he does not attain to repeated birth, but (only) comes to Me, O Arjuna

Verses 9, 10 and 11 bring the general trend of the discussion again into line with the subject of the whole chapter, after a brief digression, regarding the nature of Krishna's divine incarnation The author is evidently conscious that the subject of incarnation is likely to be too easily misunderstood, making out the Absolute either a hypostatic or a hierophantic entity. Verse 9 is a caution against such a possible asymmetrical view. The birth and activity of the Absolute, though it could be considered *divyam* (divine), as belonging to a contemplative context, is on the other hand still to be understood *tattvatah* (according to the basic principles) which are special to the Gita

Although verse 5 seemed to refer to many distinct births or lives for Arjuna and for the Absolute, that was only a tentative statement, for in verse 9 it is explicitly stated that it is possible for a man of knowledge of the Absolute to merge in the Absolute without having *punarjanma* (rebirth). If rebirth or

repeated life could be transcended by means of wisdom, it would go without saying that the Absolute itself is not subjected to successively disjunct births Tentative theories of reincarnation are thus revalued in terms of a life eternal in the Absolute with no question of rebirth at all

The word *tattvatah* (according to principles) is a favourite term of the Gita It occurs in VI 21 VII 3 X 7 and XVIII 55 and is meant to draw one s attention to the philosophical basis of the finalized teaching The same purpose is sometimes served by expressions such as *yathoktam* (as declared here) in XII 20 *matam mama* (my final opinion) in XIII, 2 Expressions such as *ativa me priyah* (they are exceedingly dear to me) in XII 20, also help to underline such final teachings These correspond to the verily verily I say unto you of the New Testament and could be used to distinguish the finalized doctrine of the Gita where it is meant to be emphasized as against anterior opinions

[10] *vita raga bhaya krodha*
manmaya mam upasritah
bahavo jnana tapasa
puta madbhavam agatah

Rid of attachment fear and anger and wholly filled by Me alone and surrendering to Me many who have been purified by the discipline of wisdom have entered into My (very) being

Here it is pointed out that entry into the eternal life of the Absolute as meant in the Gita is nothing superhuman or difficult of attainment One does not have to be a superman or super Brahmin to come to this state It is a path which is public and open to all on the simple condition that one should be purified in the fire of wisdom which itself is accepted as a form of discipline as the word *jnāna tapas* (wisdom discipline or wisdom burning) would imply

Such a consummation as here referred to involves no duality even in the form of a God to be adored Whatever duality might be implied in the term *mam upāsritah* (resorting to Me) is soon counterbalanced by the expression prefixed to it which is significant—*manmayah* (made up of the very stuff of myself) For purposes of expression of a doctrine a certain latitude in the way of making a statement is permissible.

That is why vestiges of duality seem to persist here and there as in the words such as "resorting to Me" mentioned above. Freedom from the three enemies of contemplation, which are again enumerated, is the only prerequisite for the establishment of identity with the Absolute, for one who intensely surrenders himself to the Supreme value it represents

[11] *ye yathā mām prapadyante*
tāms tathai 'va bhajāmy aham
mama vartma 'nuvartante
manushyah pārtha sarvasah

As each chooses to approach Me even accordingly do I have regard for him My very path it is, O Bhārata (Arjuna), that all men do tread from every (possible) approach

This verse contains the converse statement of III, 23, where the following of the example of the Absolute when he refrained from activity would be disastrous The path of the Absolute here however implies inclusively all other relativist paths, just as the value of a gold coin would imply all items of small change To the extent that absolutism could be implied, even in a relativist religious or spiritual discipline, it becomes to that extent acceptable in the same light of the Absolute principle When however, relativism breaks away and has no connection at all with absolutist values implicitly or explicitly, then there is the danger referred to in III, 23. Two reciprocal movements of aspects of the same Absolute principle, one ascending and the other descending, are implied in III, 23 and here

In a sense, therefore, all men belong to one religion and, in another sense, when they are not affiliated at all to absolutism, humanity stands in danger of being subjected to a process of *sankara* (disruption) as we have seen under III, 24. Lack of affiliation to the Absolute and turning away, as it were, from owning allegiance to the Absolute, is what results in such a disaster for the whole of humanity. The *dharmasya glanih* (decay of the sense of right) is also, as we have explained under IV, 7, to be understood in the same light. Verses III, 31 and 32 also insist that it is important that a strict bi polar relation should be established before the teaching of the Gita could result in any good at all

As a corollary to this verse, it could be stated that there is but one religion for all men That religion, irrespective of its diverse forms or expressions which it might have outwardly, in so far as these are affiliated to the Most High or the Absolute, becomes one and the same finally in effect. It is on this basis that the motto of the Guru Narayana of 'One Religion' becomes justified in the light of the Gita

A Christian who worships Christ as a representative of the Most High belongs to the same religion as a Mussalman who follows Mohammed as the Prophet of Allah, the Most High Absolute of Islam In India the rivalries of Vaishnavism and Shaivism could be bridged also in the same way Even ideologies which seem atheistic or irreligious can imply a certain affiliation to absolute values and to that extent, all these paths become in effect the same

The word *sarvasah* (from every side) shows that the unitive principle of the Absolute represents a central neutral human value

[12] *kankshantah karmanam siddhim*
yajanta iha devatah
kshipram hi manushe loke
siddhir bhavati karmaja

Desiring the benefits coming from actions and thus sacrificing to the gods, quick indeed are the results born of works in this world of men

The meaning of this verse can be construed in two ways By standards of strict Panini grammar we are bound to break up *yajanta iha* as *yajante iha* (they do sacrifice here too) The other more natural way of construing which seems to be in keeping with the structure or style of the verses in the Gita, and which yields also a more cogent and less banal meaning, is when we break the compound word into *yajantah iha* (sacrificing here) which is participial and similar to *kankshantah* (desiring) of the same line with which one may suppose it should balance In spite of this second way conforming less strictly to the requirements of pure grammar, we prefer it to the first because it retains a certain dialectical flavour and symmetry which otherwise interpreted would give just a banal statement which would then serve no apparent purpose in the present context.

Most translators, however, have voted for pure grammar against better meaning, as for example, even Sankara, not to speak of Bhagavan Das and Radhakrishnan [1]

When the purpose of this verse in this present context is properly understood there is no room for confusion In the next natural section of this chapter we are entering into considerations such as the four castes, action and inaction, and the different forms of spiritual disciplines such as *pranayama* (restraint of vital functionings), the large range of whose variety will have to be examined, culminating in the final triumph of wisdom at the end of the chapter The task is both delicate and enormous, and the author, as he himself has already stated in a previous chapter, does not want to discourage one form of discipline which might suit a certain individual, and praise wisdom at its expense Such a disruptive method has been cautioned against in III, 23.

Therefore, although the general trend of this verse inevitably casts a slur as it were on the utilitarian catch-penny or quick-result producing forms of sacrifice to which the generality of mankind are normally attracted, the author succeeds by the balanced construction, to maintain a neutral attitude

The word *iha* (here) and the pointed reference to *mānushe loke* (world of men) are reminiscent of other references of a similar kind in XV, 2 If we note that there the karma (action) referred to is more thoroughly deprecated, as we shall see when we come to it, the implications of this present verse become unmistakable, and that it is by no means laudatory *a propos* the sacrifices of the kind mentioned

Orthodoxy however, tends in the opposite direction, and hence the trouble in the interpretation that we have noticed in many editions, some introducing long parenthetical clauses of their own, as if to force the verdict in favour of their own inclinations The Gita takes a perfectly neutral standpoint as between the orthodox and the heterodox, which is all to its great credit

[1] Thanks to Bhagavan Das himself we find from his learned *Introductory Note on Samskrt Grammar* "Judging by grammatical and rhetorical canons of post Pānini classical' Samskrt, a literary critic might see in the *Gitā*, many defects of language style, and composition, (1) archaisms, (2) lacunae, (3) double *samdhi s*, (4) use of the *atmane-pada* for the *parasmai-pada* and *vice versa* (5) confused syntax, (6) too profuse use of expletives, (7) also of vocatives (8) also of prefixes and so on" (pp xxxviii xxxix, *The Bhagavad-Gitā* by Annie Besant and Bhagavan Das, Madras, 1950)

The phrase *kshipram hi* (with speedy rebound verily) is rather puzzling though significant, because even an agriculturalist does not reap as soon as he has sown If we think of progeny it has its own time to be considered Sacrifices take effect cyclically and elaborately according to the cosmology of the *Vedas*, conceived in terms of births and deaths, which also have a duration In what sense then is this quickness to be understood? The reference must be to the most basic and fundamentally necessary aspects of life itself, as for example, to breathing The *siddhi* or the result to be attained by breathing which is life itself, is immediate There is no long cycle of causes and effects involved in this basic sacrifice of breath The possibility of such sacrifices and the recognition the Gita wants to give them are evident from verses 29 and 30

Taking human society as a whole and its natural propensity to offer burnt sacrifices to gods (*e g*, in the Vedic society), the duration implied, which encompasses both action and its recompense (*siddhi*) may be said to constitute a natural basic norm or unit, belonging to that particular context There is no harm therefore in the employment of the term "quickly" here, although it should not be understood in the sense of mechanistic immediacy, as for example, with a slot machine, but conceived more organically A unit minimal span of interest is involved in such worldly sacrifices whose results are, according to the Gita here, good as far as they go

Finally, it is possible to justify the expression "quickly" also by taking it to mean "immediate" in which case ends and means of a ritualistic action may be said to coincide as suggested in verse 24 of this chapter A pure ritual conceived under the category of the Absolute involves the eternal moment where action and its reaction are not separated at all by any interval of time

[13] *chatur varnyam maya srishtam*
guna karma vibhagasah
tasya kartaram api mam
viddhy akartaram avyayam

The four fold colour grades (*varnya s*) were created by myself on the basis of innate disposition (*guna*) and vocation (*karma*) that accorded with each, know Me to be the maker of such as also to be its undoer, unexpended

Considering that this chapter deals with wisdom, *i e*, perennial wisdom, as we have explained, the link uniting this verse which apparently deals with sociological questions, with the previous verse, is rather frail

Verse 12 told us of quick result producing sacrifices This verse deals with the four castes The word *karma* (action) is the common subject Leading from the simplest of human actions which produce quick or immediate results as we have seen, we come here to various grades of actions as found here in the human world These are the major types of vocations found in the world

All and various possible actions in such a world are here brought under four general categories of necessity There are some actions which may be said to be comparatively free from the binding chain of necessity There are others which are tied down very close to necessity with very little freedom of movement. All these four possible gradations have been referred to here as belonging to the four castes *brahmana*, *kshattriya*, *vaishya* and *sudra*, apparently

The brahmana enjoys relative freedom with the longest tether, as it were, because he is a scholar and his livelihood is in performing sacrifices for himself and others as *Manusmriti* (I, 88 ff) says The kshattriya or warrior, capable of risking his life, enjoys a similar freedom, though of shorter tether, as a warrior cannot be expected to command respect outside his domain to the same extent as a scholar The vaishya, cultivator and merchant, has less freedom at his command, being bound to the soil and to the nature of his business, with a more limited range of choice Lastly, concerning the sudra or proletarian, Manu lays down (I, 91) "one occupation only the Lord prescribed to the sudra, to serve meekly the other three castes" Thus the status of the sudra is one of the utmost bondage to necessity

These grades of difference are supposed to exist in nature whether in the Vedic world or outside it, and it is in this sense that Krishna, as representing the Absolute, here says that he created the four castes

We had reference already to *jatidharma* (caste customs) and *kuladharma* (clan customs) in I, 43 *Varnasamkara* (degeneracy due to promiscuous mixing of races) is also referred to in the same verse and the evil consequences are pictured graphically in Arjuna s own words as the fall of the *pitris* (ancestors) due to the break in the offering of propitiatory rice-balls and water

Those responsible for these grave omissions, Arjuna says, would themselves be destined to go to hell This graphic account of Arjuna as a *purva pakshin* (anterior sceptic) in the Gita is not dealt with or even done justice to by any passing reference in the teaching of Krishna himself, except perhaps by the overall pardon of sin which he promises again and again if Arjuna should follow Krishna's absolutist way of life

The word *varna* (colour) or *chaturvarnya* (four grades of colour) of the present verse is not quite the same as the *jati* (kind or species) or the *kula* (clan) with which Arjuna's mind is obsessed, and which is met only with faint attention by Krishna This should mean to us that Krishna does not take Arjuna s objections seriously The *chaturvarnya* (four grades of colour) however, in Krishna's words, has a better status, even as a topic of discussion

We think in our own times of the word *varnāshrama dharma* (duties of colour and stages of life treated together) by which ponderous name the existing so called caste system ' of India is often referred to Here *varna* undoubtedly refers to colour and *ashrama* to the four stages of spiritual effort which are quite a different matter to the four castes

In the confused background of the orthodox Indian mind, these two different subjects came to be linked up vaguely due to long usage Here in this verse the reference is clearly to the *chaturvarnya* (four grades of colour) which was known at the time of the Gita Its character in the context of proper religious obligations is unmistakable in the light of *Manusmriti* and less explicitly in the vaguer implications of most of the *Puranas* (legends) (see *Manusmriti* I, 88 ff) Some *Puranas* even deny the four divisions as existing from the beginning, as for example, the *Mahabharata* which states, "There was originally but one colour or race (*ekavarnam*) in the entire universe, O Yudhishthira, but by the specialization due to innate or overt action the four colour divisions became established" (quoted by Radhakrishnan, *B G*, p 161)

Krishna here refers to the four castes, not in the rigid obligatory sense of the *Manusmriti* The Gita is a *Brahma vidyā-sastra* (textbook of the science of the Absolute) or *sruti* (directly revealed or taught philosophy) and not a *dharma sastra* (textbook on lawful conduct) as the *Manusmriti* is The difference of treatment, therefore is only to be expected Comparing the natural actions belonging to each of these divisions as stated under XVIII, 41 ff and what is laid down as the duty of each

group in Manu we find a striking disparity whose discussion is reserved for XVIII, 41 ff.

No sooner does Krishna say that he is the creator of the four broad-based social divisions than he denies his own responsibility and washes his hands free from it by turning round and stating just the opposite—*viddy akartāram avyayam* (know me to be the non-agent thereof and the ever-unspent, *i.e.*, the Absolute). The apparent contradiction is nothing new, taken in relation with the explanations in the previous chapters. The Absolute, as we have pointed out under verse 12, is neutral as between orthodoxy and heterodoxy, or the necessary and contingent. This same neutral position of yoga is emphasized here, even in relation to the four castes in the domain of necessity on the one hand, and to the free ideal of a casteless, classless society on the other hand.

That this latter open and free way belongs to the Gita is confirmed by the second line of IX, 32, which opens the door of wisdom freely to women, *vaishyas* (agriculturalists and merchants) and *sudras* (proletarians), irrespective of any low birth that might be a stigma attached to them in actuality. Even in XVIII, 41-44 a careful comparison with corresponding verses in *Manusmriti* (I. 88 ff.) will reveal to anyone that while the laws of Manu belong to the domain of strict obligation and duty, here the Gita contents itself merely with saying that certain persons are fitted by their temperament to do certain types of action. A closer scrutiny of the items of actions assigned to each group reveals further that they include actions that are actions only in an extended contemplative sense. The verse-endings with the phrase *svabhāvajam* (born out of one's own nature) in XVIII, 42-44, show unmistakably that there is no question of any obligatory duty at all in the Gita as in the *Manusmriti*. On the other hand it is purely a question of psychological types and professional orientation as understood even in modern times.

The concern of the Gita is only to see that types that conform to the three *gunas* (qualities or properties of nature) as elaborated in chapters XIV and XVII, are properly matched with the corresponding actions or vocations belonging to their proper nature All that the Gita wants to avoid is the misfit of a square type in a round hole, and no reference to clan or caste or anything hereditary or by birth is anywhere countenanced. Even the reference to *varna* (colour) is only incidental.

This interest of the Gita in seeing that the proper type gets the proper job is in keeping with its own doctrine of *svadharma* (one's own proper or natural conduct) as conceived in the most general terms applicable to the whole of humanity, as we have seen under III, 35, and which is again repeated in XVIII, 47 The Gita is interested in the sociological question of divisions only in so far as it is a corollary to the doctrine of *svadharma* (one's own natural conduct)

Many scholars have been of the opinion that this elaborate theory of *svadharma* (one's own natural conduct) and the matching of the inner and outer nature of each individual as the way of happiness, constitutes the major contribution of the Gita to thought We tend to agree with them, but must add that in applying this doctrine to social types, the Gita is not so much intent on contributing an elaborate theory of its own, as on revaluating and restating in absolutist terms its own revised position as a *sâstra* (scientific textbook) in regard to some of the deep rooted and firmly established notions of race or caste which vitiated the mind of the common man in India

Further, a close examination of the *Manusmriti* will reveal that it is a book conceived on a war-footing as between Aryans and non-Aryans It cannot be understood in any other way For example, *Manusmriti* x, 129 reads "No collection of wealth must be made by a sudra even though he be able (to do it) for a sudra who has acquired wealth gives pain to brahmanas" Moreover such qualities as dexterity required of a *kshattriya* (warrior)—see Gita, XVIII, 43—can never be thought of as coming under obligatory duty, being of the nature of a special personal aptitude in an individual A *kshattriya* (warrior) always thinking of war, would be no less absurd than a Don Quixote A just war in the outer world has to correspond to the inner nature of a warrior if the absurdity otherwise implied in fighting is to be avoided One sided and mechanistic interpretations of a rigid and hereditary caste system as sometimes imagined to exist in India have no semblance of support in the Gita In the sense here, caste comes nearer to the notion of *jâti* (kind species) than to *chaturvarnya* (four divisions of colour in society) Purity of race or chastity is implied in the notion of caste thus understood A brahmin, whether Vaishnava or Shaiva as we see him among orthodox Hindus today is really a follower of certain Gurus of comparatively recent days Even at the time of the *Puranas* (religious legends),

Yudhishthira is heard to deplore the abolition or complete absence of any group of men who can claim any purity of strain as understood in the sense of *jati* "It is difficult to find out the caste of persons on account of the mixture of castes Men beget offspring in all sorts of women So conduct is the only determining feature of caste according to sages" (see Radhakrishna, *B G*, p 161) Caste as understood in India today has become more than an anachronism or even a misnomer and cannot claim support either from instinct, common sense, traditional lore or from the *sastras* properly so called such as the Gita

The wisdom of the Gita is not closed against any section whether in or outside the Vedic context, as IX, 32 (and XVIII, 41 taken with XVIII, 46) lays down so finally In view of the fact that chapter IX concludes the arguments of Krishna in a way, and forms the middle of the whole of the Gita, the finality of this verdict is not to be questioned Taken together with that sweeping or concluding dictum found in XVIII, 66 at the end of the whole discussion itself, where the Gita recommends the throwing to the winds of all duties, the free, open and dynamic character of the Gita should be unmistakable

Returning to the present verse we see that the four castes and the corresponding outer activities are to be dealt with organically as still within the relativistic domain, forming natural gradations as we ascend from strict necessity to the freedom of the Absolute Before this gradation in the relativistic domain is properly understood, some theoretical considerations about action itself are entered into in subsequent verses, culminating in that famous verse 24 where all actions, whether viewed relatively or in a manner in keeping with the Absolute, are equated and unitively treated under the supreme aegis of the Absolute

The phrase *tasya kartaram* (its creator) should be understood in the sense that, like all other factors given in nature, the Absolute is indirectly at least to be considered as the creator The distinction has already been discussed under IV, 6 8

In summing up we can say that the Gita here is not con cerned with social obligations, but only with that harmony between the inner and outer life of an individual which is the yoga that should lead him to the supreme Good

[14] *na mām karmani limpanti*
na me karmaphale spriha

iti mam yo 'bhijanati
karmabhir na sa badhyate

> I am not affected by works nor have I any interest in the benefit of works, he who understands Me in this manner comes no more under the bondage of works

This verse is evidently meant to bring back the discussion into line with the wisdom of the Absolute which is the subject of this chapter from the seemingly sociological reference of the last verse Even in that last verse we have tried to explain how it was not social obligation which was dealt with, but rather the possible grades of activity open to a man still living within the conditions of relativist society, which could be approximated more or less to the absolutist way of life with which the whole chapter is concerned Therefore this verse underlines the role of Krishna as a representative of pure absolutism He is untouched by any action, relativist or otherwise He does not desire even the successful working of the system of four castes of the previous verse, as the phrase *na me karmaphale spriha* (nor is there any interest in the result of action) declares To understand that such a neutrality is of the nature of the Absolute is the way to wisdom, as pointed out here Both the subject and the object, the latter being the knower here, are absolved from the bondage of action, *i e*, no obligation even of caste duties attaches to the knower

[15] *evam jnatvā kritam karma*
purvair api mumukshubhih
kuru karmai 'va tasmat tvam
purvaih purvataram kritam

> That very kind of work that the ancients performed after knowing in this manner, even that work therefore do you also, as was performed by ancients desiring emancipation in times more ancient

Here it is not an appeal to Arjuna to walk in the usual traditional way The appeal is rather to walk in the way of timeless perennial wisdom which is a different matter If it was the mere following of tradition which was recommended, the term *evam jnatva* (knowing thus) would be superfluous

The term *mumukshubhih* (those desirous of emancipation) must here refer to emancipation through wisdom and not through observance of traditional practices This is but in keeping with the spirit of the Gita and of this chapter particularly

Purvaih purvataram (by ancients in more ancient times) clearly suggests the perennial rather than the ancestral nature of this wisdom Every ancient wisdom, the phrase suggests, has something more ancient behind it, taking us back to eternity rather than to any definite point of time in history however long ago

The words *karmai 'va* (even the action) are meant to stress the perennial nature of necessity or karma (action) also The wisdom here recommended consists partly at least of recognizing this perennial necessity of action as inevitable to man and which cannot be left out of consideration, even for one who aims at emanacipation in an absolute sense

[16] *kim karma kim akarme 'ti*
kavayo 'py atra mohitah
tat te karma pravakshyāmi
yaj jnatva mokshyase 'subhat

On what is action and what is inaction even intelligent men here are confused I shall indicate to you that action on knowing which you will be emancipated from evil

The *karma* (action) which becomes inevitable and justifiable in the manner indicated in the last verse is recognized by the Gita to be a difficult matter to determine Any action which is habitual is not here recommended The three varieties of action are referred to in the next verse That proper kind of action conducive to absolution from evil is what is to be wisely distinguished here Only such a particular kind of action is important and to be treated as necessary by a wise man Extraneous or incidental aspects of action are not to be taken seriously Even the wise, it says, are perplexed about this The same sentiment is repeated in the next verse Only a wise man is able to distinguish the subtle distinction implied here between (1) action that is permissible, (2) action that should be avoided and (3) action in keeping with absolutist wisdom and neutralizable by wisdom

[17] *karmano hy api boddhavyam*
boddhavyam cha vikarmanah
akarmanas cha boddhavyam
gahana karmano gatih

One has to understand about action and understand also what is wrong action, again one has to have a proper notion of non-action the way of action is elusively subtle (indeed)

Three classes of action are referred to here The first is just plain *karma* (action), the second is *vikarma* (distorted or mis-action), and the third is *akarma* (non action or inaction) Inaction is included under the title "action" here and this could be justified in the light of the Samkhya teaching where *abhava* (non-existence) is spoken of as a *padartha* (entity) as "nothing" could be conceived only in terms of negative existence

Under *vikarma* (mis-action) we should include all such merely traditional actions which are extraneous to the discipline of *brahma-vidyā* (science of the Absolute) as understood in the Gita *Akarma* (inaction) would refer to a negative attitude towards action, as when a man obstinately tries to live in a vacuum repressing all activity, natural or otherwise, as heterodox anti-ritualists in India tended to be in the post-Buddhistic period

When the notion of action has been subjected to these two correctives and both subtracted, as it were, there remains a residue of action pure and simple which properly belongs to the way of life of a perennial philosopher who neither rejects anything wilfully because of his moods, nor suppresses anything wilfully against his own deeper nature

The wise man dialectically revalues his position constantly as his life is spent in keeping with the perennial way of those who went before him in the path of the Absolute Such a path is full of wonder and mystery as the word *gahanā* (subtle, elusive) indicates No *sastra* (scientific text) definitely lays down this way of life A man of intuition is supposed to be aware of it.

[18] *karmany akarma yah pasyed*
akarmani cha karma yah
sa buddhimān manushyeshu
sa yuktah kritsnakarmakrit

One who is able to see action in inaction and inaction in action, he among men is intelligent, he is one of unitive attitude (yogi) while still engaged in every (possible) kind of work

Here is a typical verse in which paradox excels Sankara and others have tried in vain to reduce the meaning of this verse to rational terms by various clever examples such as that of the appearance of recession of trees on the shore to a man sitting in a moving boat

The mystery is better left unsolved, so as to retain the element of wonder and the sense of the numinous emerging out of the verse This would be in keeping with the spirit of the previous verse Other verses, such as II, 16, 19 and 69 and many in chapter XIII, go to show how the Absolute is the neutral meeting ground of opposites All paradoxes become justified with reference to the Absolute The heightening of the mystery does not detract but enhances the glory and the wonder Wonder itself is a value when it applies to the Absolute, especially the final wonder of the wise man established in absolute non duality

In the present context there are ambivalent, dichotomous or bi polar aspects of the soul of man which are inter related, such as instinct with intelligence What instinct is convinced of, intelligence cannot appreciate, and what intelligence sees, instinct cannot The soul of man as understood in its absolute sense, is the meeting place of opposites The neutral ground of wisdom is none other than the same

Brahman (the Absolute) is itself spoken of in the Upanishads as having a high (*para*) and a low (*apara*) aspect Both together are sometimes referred to by the compound word *parapara* (high low) The *adhyasa* (super imposition) of one aspect of the Absolute on the other and *vice versa* is the cause of confusion We are constantly prone to this error When our hands are inactive the mind is active, and when the mind is inactive the hands etc come into action The man who sits still might be steeped in overpowering mental activity To reduce both these opposing tendencies into a neutral whole is the yoga of wisdom spoken of here

The last phrase *kritsnakarmakrit* (while still engaged in all possible kinds of work) is just to show that one set of actions has to be reduced in terms of the other and both cancelled out into a certain unitive neutrality, irrespective

of whatever actual or virtual activities might be implied in the situation.

This way of neutralizing activity is the same as has been indicated *in III, 43, where the Self is spoken of as being* restrained by the Self The word *kritsnam* (all) is meant to include both *the innate and overt forms of activity* The word *buddhimān* (an intellectual man) is in keeping with the subject-matter *of this* chapter *on jnāna yoga* (unitive wisdom).

[19] *yasya sarve samarambhah*
kāma samkalpa varjitāh
jnānāgni dagdha karmānam
tam āhuh panditam budhāh

That man whose works are all devoid of desire and wilful motive, whose (impulse of) action has been reduced to nothing in the fire of wisdom, he is recognized as a knowing person (pandit) by the wise

This verse and the verses up to 24 inclusive constitute a section in which the purest kind of free action as recommended in III, 9, is finally stated Thus in the revised light of absolute wisdom, ends and means coincide

The first prerequisite of such a freedom-yielding absolutist action is indicated here Such action has to be free from *kāma* (desire) and *samkalpa* (wilful motivation) Even after these two outgoing tendencies have been curbed or withdrawn, there is a residual *action or tendency to act which is of the nature of a vital urge This vital urge, however, is brought* under *the scrutiny of wisdom As indicated in the previous* verse, it becomes negated as *akarma* (inaction) As the fire of wisdom burns all *action to ashes as stated in verse 37,* this cancelling out into neutrality of all action is only to be looked upon as a *normal consequence* of absolutism, involving what St. Thomas Aquinas might have called the principle of double *negation Action* cannot stand the light of absolute wisdom, being a negative factor, just as light and shade cannot live *together*

[20] *tyaktva karma phalā sangam*
nityatripto nirāsrayah
karmany abhipravritto 'pi
nai 'va kimchit karoti sah

Relinquishing attachment for the benefit of works, ever happy and independent, though such a man be engaged in work, he (in principle) does nothing at all

Here the same opinion is stated in more finalized form. As a cancelled cheque is not valid, the visible aspects of action that a wise man might be seen performing outwardly are to be treated as null and void in the light of the neutralizing synthesis of wisdom. Here the actor acts for action's own sake, "not depending" upon anything outside (as the word *nirāsrayah* indicates), and desiring no outside benefit or result, *i e.*, treating ends and means unitively. So he is always content, free from worry and expectation.

[21] *nirāsir yatachittātmā*
tyakta sarva parigrahah
sāriram kevalam karma
kurvan nā 'pnoti kilbisham

One free of all expectancy and of subjugated relational self-consciousness, who has given up all possessiveness, being engaged in actions that are merely bodily (automatic), he does not acquire evil.

Note that this verse concedes a little more than what is implied in the last verse, inasmuch as the body is supposed to continue to act with whatever may be said to be of the nature of a reflex or automatism.

The phrases (1) *yatachittātmā* (one of subjugated relational self), *chitta* being that aspect of personal consciousness capable of attaching itself to a desired idea or object, and (2) *aparigrahah* (without possessiveness) denote two additional requisites for a man of wisdom, giving a deeper qualification than just being free from attachments.

[22] *yadrichchhā lābha samtushto*
dvandvātito vimatsarah
samah siddhāv asiddhau cha
kritvā 'pi na nibadhyate

Satisfied with chance-gains, unaffected by conflicting pairs (of interests), non-competitive, remaining the

same in gain or no gain, he remains unbound in spite of having been active

The general attitude towards life of a man of wisdom as he lives and moves among men is outlined here Chances come to him, but he is not a fortune hunter who runs after chances Conflicting pairs of opposites belonging to the world of automatic actions have been transcended by him Naturally, such a man does not have to enter into competitive rivalry with others He is a *vimatsarah* (non competitive person)

[23] *gatasangasya muktasya*
jnanavasthita chetasah
yajnaya 'charatah karma
samagram praviliyate

In the case of one whose attachments are gone, who has gained freedom, whose spiritual being has been founded on wisdom, his works having a sacrificial character only, become wholly dissolved

The same idea is elaborated further—only there is pointed reference to action coming under the definition of sacrifices, in the sense that these do not bind, as indicated in III, 9

This special category of actions done disinterestedly must imply some absolutist value Even when offered to a god, as implied in verse 25 below, even if the sacrificer's notions of a deity are imperfect, to the extent that his offering implies pure motives, it has the effect of dissolving the binding character of action What is meant here is put more *finally in* the next verse, in whose light we should understand the further implications of this verse Nobody can understand the Absolute except from *the point of view of his own relative* self, and conversely nobody can understand the relative except from the standpoint of the Absolute There is an inevitable *limitation of the one notion* by the other, thus inevitably introducing an element of solipsism into the argument The action dissolving power of pure acts of sacrifice referred to here *is therefore* justified by the principle of solipsism itself It is possible however to treat both ends and means, relative and Absolute, more unitively, as is done so well in the next verse

[24] *brahma 'rpanam brahma havir*
brahmagnau brahmana hutam
brahmai 'va tena gantavyam
brahma karma samadhina

(For him) the Absolute is the act of offering, the Absolute is the substance offered into the Absolute which is the fire offered by (him) the Absolute, the end to be reached by him being even the Absolute by means of his peace supreme of absolutist action

This is another verse masterpiece often quoted Ends and means belonging to a ritualistic context are here brought together unitively, abolishing every shade of difference between them The final phrase *brahma karma samadhina* (by means of a peace which is the same as action, which is the same as the Absolute, or *brahma=karma=samadhi*) is a beautiful word confection made up of a value (peace) consisting of end (Absolute) and means (action) Action is the means and the two ends are the cosmological (*brahman* the Absolute) and the psychological (*samadhi* the peace of a unified Self) The compound word thus brings all sacrifice concomitants together without making a distinction between ends and means

[25] *daivam eva pare yajnam*
yoginah paryupasate
brahmagnau apare yajnam
yajnenai 'vo pajuhvati

As referring to the gods (of the Vedas) is (the nature of) the sacrifice of some yogis (men of unitive discipline), others offer sacrifice into the fire of the Absolute by sacrifice itself

From verse 25 to 32 there is a comprehensive discussion of all patterns of sacrifice from the most basic ones understood in the Vedic context such as a simple burnt sacrifice to the gods to the same conceived in the light of self realization as understood in verse 24

Here again the same principle of treating ends and means unitively is repeated in the second line more finally Instead of *brahman* (the Absolute) being offered as a sacrifice into *brahman* this verse goes one step further and states that sacrifice

itself is offered as a sacrifice The non duality is thus further finalized, thus setting the furthermost limit to the concept of *yajna* (sacrifice) that is possible to attain through the rationalization of sacrificial action The anterior limit is marked out by the first line which states the usual case of an *agnihotra* (fire sacrifice) of the Vedic context As we had occasion to point out under IV, 23, that a man sacrifices to the *devas* (the divine, gods shining ones) is not in itself any disqualification in the light of the Gita teaching, on condition that the counterparts of ends and means are compatible and capable of being cancelled out unitively

Any man who has not attained full enlightenment is bound to offer a sacrifice according, to his own lights regarding higher values or ideals To ask any man to do better than what he can, would be neither possible nor fair Indra, Varuna and other gods of the *Vedas* are personifications of certain higher or idealized human values They are 'shining ones' who are immortal, and are supposed to live with eyes that never shut, in the world of the intelligibles as Plotinus would put it Similiar ideas are familiar in Plato s writings All that we are to recognize here is that as between the sacrificer and the gods there is a difference of value in a certain scale of values which is natural for a human being to have in his mind when he thinks of his own spiritual progress The difference there fore between the higher and lower values of this scale reaching from the human to the divine must imply some sort of purificatory element, however feeble it might be Each sacrifice is good as far as it goes and better than non sacrifice When, however, a sacrifice is performed with the full implications of absolute Godhead in the mind of the sacrificer, then progress may be said to be geared to the maximum Under the aegis of a supremely absolutist form of sacrifice all other sacrifices gain a status and thus a purificatory potency

The purpose of this verse is to mark out clearly the two limits of sacrifice one being the usual Vedic and the other more in conformity with the science of the Absolute, where even the difference between the act of sacrifice and the sacrificer, as ends and means is to be finally abolished

It should be noted that here the reference is not to a mere ritualist, but to a yogi The difference is that the yogi is constantly equating counterparts and cancelling out opposites by a certain implied dialectical method which is more than rationalization It is rather a revaluation in the

light of wisdom The various sacrifices mentioned in this chapter are to be understood as revalued and not just Vedic ritual

The reference to spiritual disciplines in the verses up to 32 have to be understood in the light of yoga Moreover *yajna* (sacrifice) is used in this section in a very comprehensive sense (in the same way as indicated in III, 10) It applies to the whole of created life The various forms of spiritual discipline to be dealt with in succeeding verses are partial applications of this pure and general principle of sacrifice in different types of discipline belonging to different spiritual traditions or schools

[26] *srotradini 'ndriyany anye*
samyamāgnishu juhvati
sabdadin vishayan anya
indriyagnishu juhvati

Some offer as sacrifice the ear and such other sense organs into the fire of restraint, others offer the sacrifice of sound and other sense interests into the fire of the senses

Two alternative cases of the control of the senses are referred to in this verse, the difference between them being very delicate An introversion or *pratyahara* (withdrawal of the senses) is implied in both instances In the first case the perceptual (or inner) aspect of the senses is taken, with hearing as the typical example Hearing is to be sacrificed into the fire of restraint In the second case the same restraint is applied to overt sound which is merged backwards and inwards as it were, into the general seat of the senses taken together, which, like the restraint, is also compared to a fire Restraint represents the central value of sacrifice

It would be legitimate to imagine a series of fires, one more subtle than the other, the gradation having been indicated already in III, 42, which, taken together with III, 6, and III, 41, is clear enough on this question of gradation Whatever is outside is withdrawn and merged in a certain graded order into the inner fire which is one's own Self Contemplation itself thus conforms to the pattern of a sacrifice Although the familiar form of a Vedic sacrifice is adhered to here, it is still contemplation in the most extended and comprehensive sense

that is really the subject matter here Whatever may be the two counterparts taken, a sacrifice is possible in principle

The term *indriyagnishu* (in the fire of the senses) is justified because the senses represent perception which is a form of light or knowing similar to the light of a flame

[27] *sarvani ndriya karmani*
prana karmani cha pare
atma samyama yogagnau
juhvati jnanadipite

> All the functions of the senses as also the vital functions others make (as) an offering of both into the fire of unitive discipline (yoga) consisting of self restraint

The meaning here goes one step further inwards in terms of contemplation, using yoga and life functions as the counterparts The phrase *atma samyama* (self restraint) is to be understood as belonging to yoga or personal discipline and is not to be mistaken for self control in any outwardly physical moral or social sense Such a restraint attains the intensity of a fire This fire is kindled by absolute wisdom and into this fire both the sets of more peripheral functions belonging to the senses and the less peripheral vital tendencies are merged or centralized In verse 26 the restraint of the peripheral items of life functioning were reduced to a form of sacrifice Here yoga and all life functions are brought under the idea of sacrifice to be equated or unitively cancelled out

[28] *dravyayajnas tapoyajna*
yogayajnas tatha pare
svadhyaya jnanayajnas cha
yatayah samsitavratah

> Likewise are others of object sacrifice and those of austerity sacrifice those who sacrifice unitive discipline (yoga) and those of self study and wisdom sacrifice who are (all) men of self control and (fully) accomplished vows

This verse enumerates the different classes of sacrifices as follows (1) the basic ritualistic sacrifice made with material

offerings, (2) sacrifice of the nature of an austerity or self-discipline as implied in verses 25 and 26, (3) the sacrifice of yoga as understood in the context of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* (Aphorisms on Yoga) though subjected to slight revaluation in the Gita as we shall see in the next verse, (4) the sacrifice of one's own study, as is normal to a student of the Upanishads, and (5) the sacrifice of wisdom, which consists of equating subjective and objective aspects of knowledge into a unitive whole

All people who engage themselves in any of these forms of sacrifice are classed as *yatayah* (people of restraint—derived from the root *yama*=restraint) as some sort of restraint is implied in all these sacrificers

The term *samsitavratah* (those of accomplished vow) puts a final mark on the enumeration of disciplines coming under the class of vows, the last mentioned to be taken as a more mature or final form of sacrifice The spiritual disciplines mentioned in verses 29 and 30 which follow, are neither austerities nor vows, but belong to the milder discipline known under yoga (as understood in VI, 17) involving no form of hardship or torture of any kind (which in fact is really condemned in XVII, 5 and 6)

[29] *apane juhvati pranam*
prane 'panam tatha 'pare
pranapanagati ruddhva
pranayama parayanah

Into the downward (inward) vital tendency others sacrifice the upward (outward) one and in the outward one the inward likewise, thus countering the tendencies, they remain ever as those (who resort to the way) of (vital) breath control

This verse refers directly to the discipline of *pranayama* (restraint of vital functionings understood both under respiration and as belonging to the larger context of the *pancha pranah*, the five vital tendencies)

The process of respiration may be said to affect only two of these five latter *pranas* (vital functionings) and those who practise *pranayama* (restraint of vital functionings) are referred to in this verse either as sacrificing *prana* (the outgoing breath or vital tendency) into *apana* (the inward or down going breath

or vital tendency) or *vice versa* Both of them have in common what is called *rodh* (to hold in check) from which the word *ruddhvā* (having held in check) is derived Those who are attached to the discipline of *pranāyama* (restraint of breath) are here referred to as *prānayāma parāyanah* Inasmuch as restraint of the *gati* (flow) of breath is the most important common element making this discipline a form of sacrifice, the order or direction in which the vital function is restrained upwards or downwards is of no consequence Both the kinds of sacrifice are therefore treated here on a par, and the restraint itself can apply to *prāna* (outgoing breath) and *apana* (down-going breath) equally, and the practice could justly be referred to as a single unitively conceived sacrifice

It should be noted here that in certain drastic and popular schools of yoga called *hatha* yoga which concern themselves with breathing exercises, there are two opposite restraints of breath called *puraka* (filling) and *rechaka* (emptying) and a third middle one called *kumbhaka* (retaining) In the Patanjali *Yoga Sutras* (Aphorisms on Yoga-discipline) *prānayama* (restraint of vital functionings) is the fourth stage of a scale of disciplines built upwards leading to *kaivalya* (loneliness or purity as applied to the Self) Reciprocal equalization of life-breaths is not explicitly implied in the *pranayāma* of the Patanjali system as here The Gita revalues Patanjali's system in the light of absolute wisdom and makes the two forms of sacrifice reciprocal and even interchangeable *Prānayāma* is not understood in the Gita as control of breath implying sustained effort in any one direction (as in Patanjali's *Yoga Sūtras*, II, 49) Here, instead of effort, only a state of calm contemplation is implied. The restraint is not laboured here, but normal and natural. The revaluation of both *hatha* yoga and Patanjali yoga have to be noticed in the unitive treatment of the two aspects of the discipline of vital breath control

[30] *apare niyataharāh*
pranan praneshu juhvati
sarve'py ete yajnavido
yajnā kshapita kalmashah

Others abstemious in food make an offering of vital breaths into vital breaths All these are connoisseurs of sacrifice who have got rid of evil through sacrifice

The idea of restraint implied in the various forms of discipline is referred to, as it were, in wholesale terms, as applied to all the vital tendencies taken together If we could say that expansion and contraction are two opposing vital tendencies, the yogi referred to here minimises or decreases the differences between these two, living in the central core of his own life. His connection with the outer world, in hearing, seeing, or enjoying what is outside, is kept at a minimum Such a control includes the taking of food which is referred to as typical here as *niyataharah* (those—restricting food) Such restriction should be understood in a generic sense to include more than actual nourishment. The same word occurs in II, 59, not in the sense of actual food eaten, but as referring to the influx of all enjoyable impressions from outside

The word *yajnāvidah* (knowers of sacrifice) is employed here as referring to all the varieties of sacrifice of the previous verses, before coming to the conclusive statement about sacrifices in the next verse In XV, 1, the word *vedavit* (veda-knower) is similarly used In the same sense also, in IX, 20, there is reference to *traividyah* (those who know the three Vedas) The Gita teaching is seen here to be kept detached and non committed to the particular disciplines or learning, whatever they may be, preserving the impersonal standpoint of a general onlooker, throwing the burden of responsibility on the experts in each school, while itself being primarily concerned with wisdom The reference to other disciplines is by way of recognition of what is valuable, permissible or necessary in each according-to the revalued position of the Gita

The word *kalmashah* (dross or impurity) is not "sin" in the religious sense as often translated, but may be said to include stains or opacity or dullness which can impede spiritual progress in general terms

[31] *yajna sishtamrita bhujo*
yanti brahma sanatanam
na 'yam loko 'sty ayajnasya
kuto 'nyah kurusattama

Those who partake of the immortal nectar of sacrificial remains go to the eternal Absolute This world is not for one of no sacrifice How can he have the next, O Best of Kurus (Arjuna)?

The idea in III, 13 of eating the remnants of sacrifice is revised here After the elaborate references to different sacrifices which do not conform to the simple Vedic burnt sacrifice pattern, the sacrifice intended here has to be understood more figuratively than as actual The *amrita* (ambrosia or immortal element) has the double suggestion of being both actual and metaphorical The simple Vedic sacrificer, when he eats the remains of a sacrifice performed according to the teaching of the Gita, *i e*, in keeping with the science of the Absolute, attains immortality, or enters into eternal life On the other hand, one who does not treat life itself as conforming to the pattern of a sacrifice misses the purpose of life altogether and consequently the best way of enjoying life *here* as well as hereafter

The phrase *kurusattama* (best of the Kurus) as applied to Arjuna, who is a Pandava, is explained by his common lineage from Kuru, the common ancestor of both Pandavas and Kauravas

[32] *evam bahuvidha yajna*
vitata brahmano mukhe
karmajan viddhi tan sarvan
evam jnatva vimokshyase

Thus many and varied are the sacrifices spread in front of the Absolute Know them all as originating in action Thus understanding them you shall gain release

This verse and verse 33 are not wholly laudatory in regard to sacrifices Wisdom is unequivocally praised at the expense of all forms of sacrifice enumerated however superior each might be when taken by itself All of them have the common effect of having their origin in some sort of action whether called discipline or sacrifice To that extent they are by necessity dualistic But by wisdom even this dualism is transcended, and such a wisdom *itself* is what burns and is burnt, as explained in the verses that follow and it is therefore this unitive sacrifice which is legitimately lauded finally here

The expression *vitatah* are spread out taken together with *brahmano mukhe* (in the face of the Absolute) establishes that very dialectical relationship as between the Absolute and the relative, found throughout the Gita which indeed makes it a

yoga *sastra* (textbook) The word *jnatva* (having known) emphasizes that it is the wisdom implied in this bi polar situation which is conducive to emancipation or freedom. The expression *bahuvidhah* (many and varied) accentuates the relativist character of all forms of sacrifice here even when treated together, as a dialectical counterpart of the Absolute The relation is as between the gold coin of wisdom which always triumphs, as we have already said, over the small change of all actions

[33] *sreyan dravyamayad yajnaj*
jnanayajnah paramtapa
sarvam karma 'khilam partha
jnane parisamapyate

Superior to any sacrifice with (valuable) objects is the wisdom sacrifice, O Paramtapa (Arjuna), all actions, O Partha (Arjuna), have their culmination in wisdom

A more definite discountenancing of the usual Vedic sacrifice at which a priest pours butter or burns objects of value by way of sacrifice is here stated Wisdom is the crowning and all embracing factor here in the spiritual life which is extolled

The expression *parisamapyate* (comes to a supreme culmination) gives primacy to wisdom in unmistakable terms All action is dross to be burnt away, and only to be permitted or tolerated for purposes of a yogic or organically conceived process of spiritual progression, to be finally discarded This principle is clearly stated also in VI, 3

Except in the case of the final doctrine of the Absolute, the Gita envisages a graded organic series of disciplines, all considered permissive To derive secondary doctrines of any final or mandatory order from the Gita is altogether against the spirit of its teaching

[34] *tad viddhi pranipatena*
pariprasnena sevaya
upadekshyanti te jnanam
jnaninas tattvadarsinah

Learn this by prostration, by searching questioning and by service, they will instruct you (duly) in wisdom, those wise men who can see the basic principles

This verse is by way of cautioning against believing that the doctrine here is to be too easily understood How yogic wisdom can inclusively cover and prevail over all forms of discipline or spiritual practices, is a secret of the perennial philosophy known only to those specifically referred to as *jnaninas tattvadarsinah* (by those men of wisdom who can see the principles involved) For obtaining such wisdom it is suggested here that one should be a disciple of such a Guru This is a well-known condition of the wisdom tradition or heritage.

Yogic wisdom cannot be transmitted mechanistically through books or by way of information The bi-polar relation between a Guru and a disciple alone can effectively imply the subtlest secrets of such a wisdom, as kept perennially alive from generation to generation

The three expressions *pranipatena* (by prostrations), *pariprasnena* (by searching questioning) and *sevayā* (by service), might suggest a picture too servile and repugnant to the modern mind The requirement for service is merely to safeguard against any possible mental disadoption which would spoil the perfect *rapport* which is an important requisite for the free flow of secret teaching between master and disciple Prostrations are not to be looked upon as a form of kowtowing, but as an expression of the willing affiliation of a disciple to the wisdom context The Gita elsewhere (II, 1) has the expression *anasuya* (uncarping) and this, taken together with such expressions as *priyo'si me* (thou art dear to me) in XVIII, 65, refer to the same relationship that is required between a wisdom-teacher and his disciple Note that in spite of all this submissive devotion, Arjuna does question Krishna, as repeated questioning is considered normal, even in this verse Arjuna has already (as we have seen in III, 2) gone to the extent of charging Krishna with confusing him with his words

[35] *yaj jnatva na punar moham*
evam yasyasi pāndava
yena bhutāny aseshena
drakshyasy atmany atho mayi

Having known this, O Pandava (Arjuna), you will not give way to delusion thus any more by this all beings without exception will be seen by you in the Self and thus in Me

After many digressions, the last of them extolling perennial wisdom as taught in the Gita, this verse brings the discussion into line with the Gita teaching as a whole, which is centred on Krishna as representing the Absolute The cosmological *Brahman* is the same as the psychological *atma* (Self), which latter implies in turn all beings without any remainder When these apparently different concepts fall into a unitive accord through proper understanding, then the confusion, whose origin was due to a certain relativistic attitude on the part of Arjuna, with which as *purva paksha* (anterior sceptic s position) the Gita s teaching started, would then have no reason to continue to agitate Arjuna s mind

The phrase *bhutany aseshena* (all beings without any remainder) covers anything and everything in the cosmos subject to the process of becoming, *bhutani* being derived from the root *bhu* (to become) That flux which comprises the whole of existence is here first equated with the Self and then with the Absolute personified as Krishna the Guru

The Guru sishya relationship just spoken of is to be established in a personal sense Hence the representation of the Absolute here in personal terms as ' Krishna ' gains a certain relevancy in this verse, as it does in the text taken as a whole, *e g*, in IX, 34 and XVIII, 65 both of which are placed at critical and rhetorically significant positions in the Gita, giving to the personal bi polar relationship implied here a very important place

This does not, however, make the Gita theistic as referring to a personal God as often thought by critics Instead of theism or worship of a God it is rather a Guru sishya relationship In the light of the repeated questioning referred to in the previous verse, this point of view that it is not a God but a Guru who is implied here, is further endorsed

[36] *api ched asi papebhyah*
sarvebhyah papakrittamah
sarvam jnanaplavenai va
vrijinam samtarishyasi

Even if you should happen to be among evil doers
the most evil doing man by the very raft of wisdom
you will be able to cross over sin

This verse has to be read with IX 30 and 31, all three verses being based on the same principle of sin being dissolved

quickly by wisdom, when the proper relation or affiliation has been established with wisdom personified as in a Guru

The superlative *papakrittamah* (the most evil-doing one) distinctly emphasizes the act and not the intention, inasmuch as to say that the man affiliated to wisdom is related to the highest of values. He has thus nothing wrong in his intention Whatever dross in the form of actual practice might still adhere to him is effectively nullified by his affiliation to wisdom This principle is more expressly brought out in IX, 30

The word *eva* (even) in the second line has the force of drawing attention to the effectiveness of wisdom in abolishing the evil of sin Sin and grace belong to the theological context, but the dawn of wisdom by its far reaching effects, belongs to such a superior order that the very question of theological sin does not arise This very fact is more clearly stated in the next verse

[37] *yathai dhamsi samiddho gnir*
bhasmasat kurute rjuna
jranagnih sarvakarmani
bhasmasat kurute tatha

Just as fire when kindled reduces to ashes the fuel O Arjuna likewise the fire of wisdom reduces all works to ashes.

The relation between wisdom and action is not one of mere mechanical opposition but when wisdom triumphs action vanishes, as it were in inverse proportion When wisdom fully shines duality disappears it is so to say all fire and no fuel Such a conclusion is arrived at by the principle of double negation Therefore the question of action ceases to arise when wisdom shines in its fullest glory

[38] *na hi jnanena sadrisa n*
pavitram iha vidyate
tat svaya n yogasamsiddhah
kalena tmani vindati

There is nothing indeed here so purificatory as wisdom which same the man of perfection throu '

unitive discipline (yoga) discovers in himself in due course

Yoga as commonly understood implies spiritual discipline or practice, which means also that it takes time to be perfected The effect of yoga when properly understood is the dawn of wisdom itself, and this implies no duration A man who thinks that mere wisdom as a discipline has no purificatory effect, is wrong The practising aspects of yoga and the theoretical aspects of wisdom, when understood properly as belonging to dialectics or yoga proper, and when judged by their common effect, come to mean the same The man who practises yoga which implies some duration and who, at the end of such practice, does not find wisdom in himself, may be said to have been misdirected in practice, or to have practised in vain Conversely, the man who has reached wisdom automatically finds all the benefits of yoga as already present in him

[39] *sraddhavaml labhate jnanam*
tatparah samyatendriyah
jnanam labdhva param santim
achirena dhigachchhati

A man of faith comes to wisdom being intent on That (Absolute) and the senses subjugated On obtaining wisdom he reaches without delay (the state of) supreme peace

Verses 39 40 and 41 bring together unitively the two aspects of wisdom conceived as a yoga From the instinctive side wisdom yoga involves such factors as *sraddha* (constancy or faithfulness) and *samyatendriyah* (controlled senses) and from the side of intelligence the dawn of wisdom takes place involving comparatively little delay, when a man is *tatparah* (one given over to That *i e* the absolute Principle) The fusing of perfection of the instincts with the perfection of factors of intelligence from two opposite poles as it were, takes place reciprocally and simultaneously These two facets of spiritual progress are referred to again in xv 11 Samkhya wisdom and yogic disciplines are more usually treated separately in Indian spiritual literature but here in the Gita each is revalued in terms of the other The implied duality between

jnāna (wisdom) and *karma* (action) thus tends to be abolished. *Santi* or peace results from the meeting of the two

[40] *ajnas cha 'sraddadhānas cha*
samsayatmā vinasyati
nā 'yam loko 'sti na paro
na sukham samsayatmanah

The unwise man and the man without faith with the Self held in (the conflict of) doubt is destroyed Neither is there this world for him nor the world beyond nor can there be any happiness for a man (caught) in doubt

The converse of verse 39 is stated here The doubting soul is one who is troubled by conflict We know that in common life a person who has a simple doubt does not perish Many persons can have various doubts and just because of this they are not destroyed The phrase *vinasyati* (goes to destruction) here has to be understood contemplatively as contrasted with the phrase *atmavantam* (one who has gained his Self) of verse 41, and also with *param santim* (supreme peace) of verse 39 As the doubt is of a contemplative order, the destruction here is also to be understood as referring to spiritual life only

Duality and consequent conflict implies a subtle form of suffering, by reason of which one is deprived of real enjoyment, whether this enjoyment is simple, belonging to biological life here, or higher and complex, such as those enjoyments that satisfy the spirit of man, such as art, culture, idealism, etc A madman can be free from hunger, but that does not necessarily mean that he enjoys life

So unless there is a yogic blend of these two aspects, the instinctive and the intelligent, one loses both the "here" and the "hereafter" in terms of happiness Thus the clearing of that doubt which is at the root of a conflict between aspects of the person is more important than life itself

[41] *yoga samnyasta karmanam*
jnana samcchinna samsayam
atmavantam na karmani
nibadhnanti dhanamjaya

CHAPTER V

UNITIVE ACTION AND RENUNCIATION

Karma-Samnyasa Yoga

WE have stated more than once that the Gita is a dialectical revaluation of spiritual or philosophical doctrines as they prevailed in India at the time it was written The character of this revaluation consists of reconciling divergent traditions in the unitive terms of an absolutist way of life

In III, 3, it was stated by Krishna that he had declared a two fold path from ancient times, there referred to as *jnana* (wisdom) of the Samkhyas and *karma* (active discipline) of the Yoga school. A revaluation of these two trends formed part of the subject matter of Chapter III As we have seen, this was continued in Chapter IV The factors of reason and instinctive action were brought as close together as possible and also discussed together We notice however that the word yoga as used in the Gita is wider and more liberal in its scope than its limited connotation in III, 3, where yoga is always associated with *karma* (action)

If we examine the history and nature of the six systems of Indian philosophy, we find that they fall into three pairs 1 Nyaya Vaiseshika, 2 Samkhya Yoga and 3 Purva Mimamsa and Uttara Mimamsa Each pair taken separately reveals on one side a rationalist trend, and another in which matters of practice or discipline are introduced Following up the development of Indian thought further, we notice that Vedic orthodoxy and heterodoxy also alternately change positions or take over primacy as between the successive pairs, as the thought matures, to culminate in the final Vedantic teaching of Badarayana, which contains, in revalued terms, all that is implied in the other anterior schools of a logical, methodological or epistemological order The final doctrinal aspects, however, belong to Vedanta as revalued and restated by master minds like Vyasa

The critical student must therefore look out for the opposing tendencies and the alternating movement from orthodoxy to

heterodoxy or from reason to faith that we find in the growth of the spiritual and philosophical thought of India, before he can be clear in his own mind about the exact nature of the revaluation accomplished chapter by chapter in the Gita.

Nyāya, for example, in its origin is orthodox or Vedic-related, though rational, logical, and Vaiseshika, is heterodox in relation to the Veda, but religious in its origin When we come to the next pair, Samkhya-Yoga, we find Sāmkhya to be rational and heterodox while Yoga as in the Patanjali system permits or tolerates an Īsvara or Lord as an alternative for its discipline. There is an interplay of atheism and theism implicit as between these two schools. In the third pair orthodoxy is represented by the Pūrva Mimāmsa (Old or Prior Critique), which is primarily concerned with Vedic ritualism though subjected to the critical scrutiny of Jaimini. Uttara Mimāmsa (Later on Higher Critique) as Vedānta itself, is neither heterodox nor orthodox, as we find in the Gita.

The same twofold path of III, 3 persists and shows itself as two distinct ways of spiritual life known in India. One is that of the *samnyāsi* (the renouncer) and the other that of the *karmi* (the doer), *i e*, of the one who still adheres to active disciplines, whether of the Yoga system or of ritualism.

It is with these two types who represent the culmination of the two currents of thought and life in India, that the revaluation of the Gita, starting with this Chapter in particular, becomes primarily concerned

However, with the vicissitudes to which these ways of life have been subjected in the long course of their development, they change their complexion, but stand out throughout mainly as typified by the *samnyāsi* and the yogi We might add also that the *samnyāsi* not only represents rational "Hindu" tradition, but also continues the Indian traditions of the Jaina and Buddhist religions, bringing in the element of heterodoxy implied in *samnyāsa* (renunciation)

In this Chapter and in Chapter XVIII these remarks will, we hope, help the reader in following the nature of the discussion and the factors involved more intelligently, without getting confused by such terms as *Sāmkhya* (rational philosophy), *Yoga* (unitive discipline and philosophy), *samnyāsa* (renunciation), *tyāga* (relinquishment of ends), and *karmi* (doer—of discipline or ritual) In all cases, however, it should be remembered that a plain ritualist or a plain Sāmkhya philosopher is quite different from a *karma-yogi* (one who

For one of unitively renounced action (by yoga) who by wisdom has sundered doubt, and come to full self possession, works can no more bind him, O Dhanamjaya (Arjuna)

This verse sums up the position attained in this Chapter The two compound words in the first line are conceived, the first on the basis of yoga and the second on the basis of *jnana* (wisdom), the former abolishing *karma* (action) and the latter abolishing doubt Both together result in *atmavantah* (one who possesses the Self) of the second line He is one who is not torn by conflict or doubt

It may be noted in advance here that it is this very double sided reference by Krishna which starts the opening question of the next chapter The duality between *jnana* (wisdom) and *karma* (action) is still largely retained, for purposes of argument at least in the present Chapter, while only in the next Chapter the rapprochement of these two factors is more completely attempted Here the object is only to get rid of the binding after effects of *karma* (action) In the next Chapter, however, the picture is of a more emancipated Self, where the yogi goes to the extent of denying or disclaiming his own actions (v 8 and 9)

[42] *tasmad ajnana sambhutam*
hritstham jnanasina 'tmanah
cchittvai 'nam samsayam yogam
atishtho 'ttishtha bharata

Therefore sundering with the sword of Self knowledge this ignorance born doubt residing in the heart, stand firm in the unitive way (yoga) and stand up, O Bharata (Arjuna)

Here the same factors mentioned in the last verse are finally brought into close juxtaposition before their more unitive treatment of the next Chapter The sword of wisdom is to be found in the Self and the doubt is found in the heart, *i e*, they are both located at two poles within the psychological make up of the person A change of heart is effected by a dose of wisdom, as it were, and *vice versa* They could not be brought any nearer to each other without losing their distinct nature The duration for a change of heart is minimised as

far as possible Samkhya reasoning, with which the Gita dialogue started, had implicit elements of duality with *karma* (action) which was unitively dealt with in the third Chapter Here in the fourth Chapter, in the light of *jnana yoga* (the yoga of perennial wisdom) the duality has been minimised to its last possible limit, to be transcended completely and more boldly in the next Chapter

The expression *atishtho* (stand firm in) and *uttishtho* (stand up) are both derived from the same root, 'to stand' and are meant to suggest the positive attitude called for in unitive understanding or yoga. Yoga cannot be accomplished lying down in lassitude It implies an ascent

Note, however, there is no definite call to action As the discussion proceeds entering into more and more subtle factors, the reference to necessary actual action on the battle-field becomes correspondingly mild Reference to actual fighting is toned down The fighting becomes internal rather than external

This Chapter, as we have said at the beginning, has also been called *jnana karma samnyasa yoga* (yoga of knowledge, action and renunciation), the justification for the use of the word *samnyasa* (renunciation) being derived from the penultimate verse The *samnyasi* (renouncer) of the Gita, however, is not a mere renouncer of action, but one who has reconciled action and inaction through dialectics with the wisdom of the Absolute The idea of renunciation is itself revalued in Chapter XVIII and a passing reference to it is found in V, 2 and 3

ity srimad bhagavadgitasupanishatsu brahmavidyayam
yogasastre srikrishnarjunasamvade
jnanayogo nama chaturtho dhyayah

Thus ends in the Upanishads of the Songs of God, in the Science of the Wisdom of the Absolute, in the Dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, the fourth Chapter entitled Unitive Wisdom

CHAPTER V

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It is with these two types who represent the culmination of the two currents of thought and life in India, that the revaluation of the Gita, starting with this Chapter in particular, becomes primarily concerned

However, with the vicissitudes to which these ways of life have been subjected in the long course of their development, they change their complexion, but stand out throughout mainly as typified by the *samnyasi* and the yogi We might add also that the *samnyasi not only represents rational* " Hindu ' tradition, but also continues the Indian traditions of the Jaina and Buddhist religions, bringing in the element of heterodoxy implied in *samnyāsa* (renunciation)

In this Chapter and in Chapter XVIII these remarks will, we hope, help the reader in following the nature of the discussion and the factors involved more intelligently, without getting confused by such terms as *Samkhya* (rational philosophy), *Yoga* (unitive discipline and philosophy), *samnyasa* (renunciation), *tyaga* (relinquishment of ends), and *karmi* (doer—of discipline or ritual) In all cases, however, it should be remembered that a plain *ritualist or a plain Samkhya* philosopher is quite different from a *karma yogi* (one who

treats action unitively) or a *buddhi-yogi* (one who treats reason unitively) as meant in the Gita where yoga is a method that can apply to all disciplines of a unitive nature The full connotation of yoga in the Gita is one that the reader has to formulate for himself stage by stage as the discussion proceeds.

Arjuna uvācha

[1] *samnyāsam karmanām krishna*
punar yogam cha samsasi
yach chhreya etayor ekam
tan me bruhi sunischitam

Arjuna said:
You recommend the effective transcending of action, O Krishna, and again yoga also tell me, duly determined, which one of these two is spiritually better.

Arjuna here enters the very heart of the problem we have just discussed His charge that Krishna's words are vague, as implied here, is legitimate, because of remarks such as those in iv, 41 and elsewhere, where the rational and the instinctive still remain distinguishable although brought very close together

Arjuna has his own prejudiced notions of *samnyāsa* (renunciation) and of yoga (unitive discipline) in his mind Perhaps the *samnyāsi* (renouncer) is by necessity the heterodox man who discards all ritualism with scant respect, more and more like a non-Hindu. The yogi perhaps presents in his mind a more orthodox person The distinction to Arjuna as an ordinary man is one involving these two alternatives He wants to accept the one and reject the other But the Gita neither accepts nor rejects but instead, as we shall see, revalues both

Sankara's concern about the promiscuous mixing of *jnāna* (wisdom) and *karma* (action) is legitimate, but the Gita teaching, properly understood does not fall into the error of confusing or mixing different sets of values together at the same time in the same person Permissive action and mandatory or obligatory action when properly distinguished, will help us to see that it is possible for one and the same person to *appear* active and really *be* inactive at the same time. Necessary action is inevitable, while contingent action can be

either permissive or obligatory The intelligent man relegates necessary action to its proper domain in the background of his personality as it were, where automisms and reflex actions take care of themselves, he himself as a conscious agent of activity remaining inactive The complex nature of such a relation between action and inaction in the human personality has already been sufficiently explained in IV, 16 to 18 and the verses that follow Sankara in his anxiety to give primacy to Advaita (non duality) is rightly scared of ritualists who might drag Vedanta again into the mire of relativist ritualism As a *prachchhanna bauddha* ' (a Buddhist in disguise), as he was called he rightly votes in favour of *buddhi* (pure reason) or *tattva* (pure principle of philosophy) to which the Gita itself as an open way of life, so often gives primacy throughout the text

Sribhagavan uvacha

[2] *samnyasah karmayogas cha*
nihsreyasakarav ubhau
tayos tu karmasamnyasat
karmayogo visishyate

Krishna said
Both renunciation (*samnyasa*) and unitive action (*karma yoga*) have emancipation as their common effect of the two however, unitive action is superior to (mere) renunciation of action

Samnyasa (renunciation) is spoken of here as being equal to *karma yoga* (unitive action) when judged by their common effect of spiritual emancipation Although thus equal when judged merely on the basis of effect or end, rather than by the method or means employed when we take into conside ration the means there *is* a difference The Gita decides in favour of *karma yoga* (unitive action) as against mere *karma samnyasa* (omission of action) The decided stand that the Gita takes in this matter is stated more finally in XVIII 6 The revaluation of *samnyasa* (renunciation) in the light of yoga may be said to be one of the important considerations of the Gita

In spite of this explanation however it must be admitted there is a residue of vagueness still left in the discussion, which

is only to be progressively remedied as we proceed It might be well to note, however, even here, that it is *karma samnyasa* (mere omission of action) which is discredited in the second line, rather than unqualified *samnyasa* (renunciation) which is to be revalued and restated more clearly hereafter

Both the *samnyasi* (renouncer) and the *karma yogi* (the one who treats action unitively) have certain traits in common. When *samnyasa* (renunciation) itself is understood as *samnyasa yoga* (renunciation treated unitively) as in ix, 28 the stigma attached to it as a merely negative form of discipline disappears, and *samnyasa* (renunciation) itself then becomes laudable

The reader should watch for revaluation in both the directions of *samnyasa* (renunciation) understood as having yoga as a means, and *karma* (action) understood in keeping with wisdom as an end When ends and means of both are thus equated, the distinction between them is abolished

In preferring *karma yoga* (unitive action) the Gita makes a contribution whose importance should not be minimised in the name of tolerance or catholicity The Gita neither advocates action nor recommends quietism, but helps to find a via media in revalued terms in which a *samnyasi* (a man of renunciation) still engages in normal activity as a form of yogic discipline

[3] *jneyah sa nityasamnyasi*
yo na dveshti na kankshati
nirdvandvo hi mahabaho
sukham bandhat pramuchyate

That man should be recognized as a perennial renouncer (*nitya samnyasi*) who neither hates nor desires free indeed from conflicting pairs (of interests), O Mighty Armed (Arjuna), he is happily released from (the) bondage (of necessity)

A slightly revised form of the *samnyasi* (renouncer) is introduced here Instead of a mere ascetic abandoner of old we have a *nitya samnyasi* (one who is ever renounced) and the simple qualifications for recognizing such a man are that he neither hates nor desires anything *i e*, he is balanced between the opposites of pleasure and displeasure attraction and repulsion which are conflicting interests entering into the life of a person.

The conventional outward marks and habits, such as shaving the head and objection to doing ritual sacrifices, which are usually associated with a *samnyāsi* (renouncer) are discarded It is the inner attitude which counts. This consists merely of being a *nirdvandvah* (without conflicting pairs of interests). This might seem too easy a condition for emancipation, but is in keeping with the teaching of the Gita which is free from religious practices or forms of holiness, as we find from the implication of v, 18, xviii, 66 and many other verses.

The word *jneyah* (should be known) shows that the *samnyāsi* hitherto has not been recognized in the way here indicated. The prefix *nitya* (perennial) implies that such a person remains a renouncer irrespective of different phases of action or inaction normal to his life. He is a renouncer to be understood in the context proper to *brahma-vidyā* (the science of the Absolute), or of perennial wisdom.

The word *sukham* (happily or easily) indicates that freedom from conflicting pairs of opposite interests in itself induces a happy state of mind. Cruel forms of asceticism are thus discountenanced

[4] *sāmkhyayogau prithag bālāh*
pravadanti na panditāh
ekam apy āsthitah samyag
ubhayor vindate phalam

That rationalism (Sâmkhya) and self-discipline (Yoga) are distinct, only children say, not the well-informed (pandits), one well-established in any one of them obtains the result of both.

[5] *yat samkhyaih prāpyate sthānam*
tad yogair api gamyate
ekam sāmkhyam cha yogam cha
yah pasyati sa pasyati

That status attained by men of Sāmkhya (rationalist persuasion) is reached also by those of the Yoga (unitive discipline persuasion), Sāmkhya and Yoga as one, he who thus sees, he (alone) sees

These verses seem to digress and revert back to a subject that has been discussed once before in ii, 39 and iii, 3 and 4.

These prior verses seem to suggest that the subjects of Sāmkhya and Yoga could be spoken of as two distinct disciplines coming from the most ancient times. In XVIII, 13 again for purposes of discussion the distinction continues to be referred to. In XIII, 24 three disciplines instead of two are enumerated, in passing. But here the author seems to be most emphatic in abolishing the distinction. And just now, in this fifth chapter, in verse 2, the same distinction was discussed under the headings of *samnyāsa* (renunciation) representing the Sāmkhya, and *karma-yoga* (action unitively treated) representing the Yoga school.

The present digression is only apparent. The plea throughout this Chapter is to look upon pure and practical aspects of spiritual life unitively. It is in terms of self-realization or in terms of the Absolute that this unity becomes clearly understood without even apparent or implied contradiction. This Chapter is heading towards such a conclusive generalized position and *samnyāsa* (renunciation) as understood in this Chapter is not so much rejection of action expressly or wilfully on the part of a spiritual aspirant, as seeing action in terms of inaction, and *vice-versa*, in the Absolute.

Theoretical justification for such a method of equalization or cancelling of opposites is found in IV, 18, where action and inaction have been equated. This Chapter even permits the disowning by the actor even of actual activity in V, 8 and 9. The Gita here insists on the unitive comprehension of both pure and practical spirituality, on both wisdom and practice being treated on a par.

Sin itself, which belongs to the context of religion, could be completely effaced from the life of an individual as already said in IV, 36 and again in V, 10. Thus sin itself needs no expiation other than the purificatory touch of wisdom. It is in this sense that the two verses here so emphatically refer to those who take the disciplines as distinct, as mere children, an attitude so unworthy of a pandit, while the author devotes a second verse to underline the same thing in his own favourite way, by saying that he alone who sees unitively sees at all.

In the discussion here, it should be noted, words like *āsthitah* (established) of verse 4, and *yogayukto munih* (unitively harmonized one of subdued ways) of verse 6, and even the word *sthānam* (status) of verse 5, imply only the minimum duality between ends and means required for the discussion.

[6] *samnyāsas tu mahabāho*
dukham aptum ayogatah
yogayukto munır brahma
nachırenā 'dhıgachchhatı

But renunciation (*samnyasa*), O Mighty-Armed (Arjuna), non-unitively (without Yoga) is full of pain to achieve, (but) one unitively harmonized (*yoga-yuktah*) of subdued ways, without any delay attains the Absolute (*brahman*)

From systems of philosophy this verse reverts to the subject that is mainly revalued in this Chapter, namely *samnyasa* (renunciation) That antique form of renunciation which is full of taboos, denials, harsh obligations, bans and austerities is here described as *dukham aptum* (full of pain to achieve). This pain is, however, minimized or abolished by that unifying solvent touch implied in yoga understood dialectically

When one becomes thus unitively harmonized, the whole picture is changed Conflicts are eased out and contradictions blended reciprocally The rest of the progress in spirituality takes care of itself All disciplines are brought under the aegis of the Absolute Mere wholehearted affiliation to the Absolute by itself has this far reaching effect as mentioned so emphatically in IV, 36, IX, 31 and 34, and in XVIII, 65

The present verse, taken together with verse 2 of this Chapter, *and again with what is implied in XII, 5, makes it clear that* the Gita favours a bi-polar relation to be established with the Absolute, which is more than intellectuality or austerity, though it gives due credit to these paths As suggested by the expression already referred to, *dukham aptum* (full of pain to achieve) here, and by the word *kleso* (difficult) of XII, 5, it is in the name of greater facility or freedom from hardship also, among more direct reasons, that the yogic method of the Gita is recommended

[7] *yogayukto vısuddhātma*
vıjıtatma jıtendrıyah
sarva bhutatma bhutatmā
kurvann apı na lıpyate

One affiliated to the unitive way of life, attained to lucidity of Self, one of Self conquest,

one who has gained a victory over the senses, whose Self-existence has become the same as the Self-existence of all, though active, is unaffected (thereby).

It will be seen that the word *ātmā* (self) as repeated in this verse, gives to the subject of yoga as understood in the previous verse, a subjective or psychological turn from one of mere discipline or austerity understood more religiously. In the unitive outlook or harmony implied in yoga, the Self is made firstly *visuddha* (lucid, transparent or clear), and secondly the lower instinctive aspects of the Self are transcended as the word *vijitātmā* (one of conquered Self) indicates, and it goes without saying that, by the same method, such a yogi becomes a *jitendriyah* (one who has gained a victory over the senses). Such a victory implies at the same time the far-reaching consequence indicated by the expression that follows, which finalizes the Self-mastery understood here; he becomes *sarva-bhūtātma bhūtātmā* (whose Self-existence has become the same as the Self-existence of all). This phrase is reminiscent of the Upanishadic dicta in the *Īsa Upanishad* 5-6, where the psychological Self is equated to the visible world of beings.

The Self thus has its movement in an axis or plane which is independent of the plane of everyday activities. It is in this sense that the usual activities of life are said not to affect the contemplative personality, and to leave him untouched.

[8] *nai 'va kimchit karomī 'ti*
yukto manyeta tattvavit
pasyan srinvan sprisan jighrann
asnan gachchhan svapan svasan

[9] *pralapan visrijan grihnann*
unmishan nimishann api
indriyānī 'ndriyārtheshu
vartanta iti dhārayan

"I do nothing at all"—saying thus, he of unitive ways, who is a philosopher (too), should think and, (while) seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, going, sleeping, breathing,

Speaking, excreting, grasping, opening and closing the eyes, treating the senses to be (merely) related to their (corresponding) sense objects

These verses enumerate those vital, automatic or reflex functionings which are incidental to physical existence, from the most passive ones such as seeing, to where the minimum volition may be said to enter, such as in the opening and closing of the eyes All belong to a biological order involving no element of contemplation, moving and having their being on a plane which has nothing to do with spiritual or contemplative life They should be treated as incidental to life in general by a *tattvavit* (philosopher) who is also *yuktah* (of unitive ways) He denies his own agency in these incidental reflex actions which automatically take care of themselves, and if he happens to be looking at or enjoying things in outside nature, he dissociates himself and maintains a certain detached neutrality like that of a scientist who looks upon even his own Self with a certain detached objectivity The contemplative disavows any direct responsibility for the incidental attachments coming through the senses

The usual ascetic practices which resort to self torture or indulge in immolation are here presented in a revised or revalued light free from such extremes

[10] *brahmany ādhāya karmani*
sangam tyaktvā karoti yah
lipyate na sa papena
padmapattram iva 'mbhasā

Placing all actions in the Absolute, having given up attachment, he who acts is not affected by sin, like a lotus leaf by water

The phrase *brahmany ādhāya karmani* (placing all actions in the Absolute) should be understood in the light of the previous verses where we saw that actions have their being on two distinct planes as it were, one not affecting the other The plane of the Absolute referred to here covers all actions of any value to a contemplative, incidental values being dis claimed by him as indicated in the last two verses All legiti mate or natural actions which could be called events that

matter in the contemplative life are brought into line, as it were, with the crowning value of Absolutism

Such pure acts involve no personal attachments or repulsions Being detached and treated purely, such acts leave the actor unaffected The favourite example of a lotus leaf in water is invoked

[11] *kayena manasa buddhya*
kevalair indriyair api
yoginah karma kurvanti
sangam tyaktva 'tmasuddhaye

By the body, by the mind, by intelligence, and even by the senses alone, yogis engage in action, abandoning attachment, for (purposes of) purity of Self

Activity is permitted to the yogi, though only in the revised light of the preceding verses Such permissive actions go beyond the scope of physiological automatisms They can be of a mental or intellectual order, and cover even sense-functions, whether afferent, belonging to the *karmendriyas* (sense action organs) or efferent, belonging to the *jnanendriyas* (sense perceptive organs)

Suppression of the senses is spoken of as the first stage of spirituality in other disciplines, but a certain freedom of the senses is permitted in the Gita, and a yogi is to that extent different from a mere ascetic who is only negatively conditioned The force of the word *kevala* (alone) taken with *api* (also) is just to bring out this revision

The term *atmasuddhaye* (for Self purification) calls for some explanation because it has just now been stated that actions do not affect the actor if he is a yogi To avoid the stagnation produced by wilful inaction and its consequent morbid psychic states and to permit the free interplay of natural tendencies and impulses, some sort of non-obstructive working out of tendencies is required Repressions benumb the spirit and cathartic easing is a remedy known to modern psychology Verses ii 33 38 and 39, as we have seen, imply the same theory It is in this sense that the purification is to be understood here

[12] *yuktah karmaphalam tyaktva*
santim apnoti naishthikim

ayuktah kāmakārena
phale sakto nibhadyate

> The one of unitive (discipline) (*yuktah*), discarding benefit-motive, attains to ultimate peace, the one of non-unitive discipline being desire motivated, attached to results, is bound

The difference between the man who relinquishes according to the requirements of yoga and one who is still motivated by desire in his action is brought out here, rounding up the foregoing discussion

In both these cases action is permitted, but in the case of a non yogi, permissive action is related to a desired end, while in the case of a yogi, ends and means neutralize each other, *i e*, desire does not obtrude as a third factor between ends and means

The expression *naishthikim* (of the nature of a pure observance or discipline submitted to by one's own choice for its own sake independent of any external pressure or obligation) implies that the peace attained by the yogi is of a supreme, finalized or absolute nature

Viewing renunciation in the light of yoga is the essential difference between the two cases contrasted in this verse *Wilful or conscious attachment to ends is what distinguishes* the non-yogic attitude Desire as a third factor interferes between the bi polarity of the Self (as means) and the Absolute (as end), and it is this third factor of interference with the bi-polar situation which is spoken of as being prejudicial to yoga

[13] *sarvakarmani manasā*
samnyasya 'ste sukham vasi
navadvare pure dehi
nai 'va kurvan na karayan

> Relinquishing by means of the mind all activities, the embodied one sits happily, a victor, in the nine-gated city, neither acting nor causing to act

The two alternative cases as between a *yuktah* (one unified or disciplined) and an *ayuktah* (one non-unified) just contrasted, are discarded here, and a new concept, the *dehi*

(embodied one) is introduced. This "embodied one" occupies, as it were, a neutral position between the other two, though of a somewhat more theoretical character, connoting an entity corresponding to the libido or soul. This soul is self-sufficient, its own master, as implied in the term *vasi* (one who has brought everything into submission, a victor). He, like a king, *āste sukham* (sits perfectly satisfied).

References to the soul as dwelling in the nine-gated city which represents peripheral aspects, both psychological and physiological, of the Self, are found in the Upanishads, *e.g.*, *Svetāsvatara*, III, 18. The nine gates are those channels of communication by which contacts, afferent and efferent, with the outer world, become possible.

The active or passive non-agency of the Self is brought out by the expression *kurvan na kārayan* (neither acting nor causing to act). The Absolute is characterized by perfect neutrality as explained in the three verses that follow.

[14] *na kartritvam na karmāni*
lokasya srijati prabhuh
na karmaphalasamyogam
svabhāvas tu pravartate

> The Supreme does not generate either the idea of agency or activity in regard to the world, nor the union of action and benefit; the innate urge in beings, however, exerts itself.

The next two verses refer to *prabhuh* (the Supreme) and *vibhuh* (the pervading One). These two expressions are often taken as a reference to God in a theistic sense, but the context here does not demand such an interpretation. The perfected man who has been referred to as a yogi untouched by peripheral aspects of ordinary existence is automatically raised in his spiritual status, which can even amount to a form of *Isatva* (lordship), one of the eight attainments according to Patanjali. It is not uncommon to refer to the soul as a *vibhuh* (the pervading One) in such a philosophical and non-theistic sense Further, to give a theistic interpretation here would make these three verses stand out as a digression, which is not intended here. The two words become necessary because of the author's intention to deal with the yogi from the standpoint of pure contemplation in which all questions of

activity, whether subjective, objective or combined, have to be ruled out The soul as the Absolute is innocent or free from such limitations

The expression *svabhavas tu pravartate* (the innate urge in beings, however, exerts itself) does not refer particularly to gross aspects of nature in manifestation That would make the activity one sided or asymmetrical and not in keeping with the notion of *prabhuh* (the superior One) Bergson's *élan vital* (vital impulse) in the most general terms comes nearest perhaps to what is intended

The ruling out of *karma phala samyogam* (the union of action and benefit) is significant, because it finalizes the advaita (non dual) position as against those schools such as the *bheda-abheda vadins* (teachers of duality and non duality together) of Bhatriprapancha so effectively refuted by Sankara in the *Brahma sutras* All vestiges of duality, explicit or implicit, are repugnant to the revalued position of Vedanta in the Gita

[15] *na datte kasyachit papam*
na chai va sukritam vibhuh
ajnanena 'vritam jnanam
tena muhyanti jantavah

The all pervading One takes cognisance neither of the sinful nor of the meritorious actions of anyone, wisdom is veiled by unwisdom, beings are deluded thereby

The theistic context to which sinful or meritorious actions belong is more finally abolished in the first lines here The pardoning and punishing God of theology referred to here as *vibhuh* (the all pervading One) which word, as we have pointed out, is equally applicable to the soul, *is revalued in the second* line in keeping with the idea of pure wisdom in the most general terms Beings are deluded and thus imagine theological gods who punish and reward and also imagine that the innermost being is affected one way or another by necessary activity All such notions are mere suppositions due to the veiling effect of *ajnana* (ignorance or unknowing)

This verse seems to contradict what has been said in III, 24, where the Absolute principle is said to be active As we have pointed out in the Introduction each Chapter of the Gita has to be looked upon though not as a separate *darsana* (viewpoint

of vision of reality), at least as a distinct *prakārana* (section) with a frame of reference proper to itself. The key concept of Chapter III being *karma* (action) a unitive concept of action was normal or permissive of usage there. In Chapter IV the discussion passed on into more unitive ways of equating action and inaction, in and the present Chapter action is even denied or disclaimed in reference to the contemplative Self. A fuller revaluation in terms of a purer absolutism becomes possible therefore here, although even here the distinction between *jnāna* (wisdom) and *ajnāna* (unwisdom) is retained, the former being veiled by the latter. The triumph of wisdom, if it is to be spoken of, has to imply its negative counterpart, at least as a rhetorical inevitable necessity.

The word *jantavah* (beings) indicates the intention of the author to make this statement in as general terms as possible, covering all beings and not as merely limited to human beings.

The word *āvritam* (veiled) is derived from the same root as *āvarana* (covering or negative form of hallucination) which is due to a weak or negative state of mind. An active mind can project imaginary values on outside objects. This is called *vikshepa* (projected or positive form of hallucination).

[16] *jnānena tu tad ajnānam*
yeshām nāsitam ātmanah
teshām ādityavaj jnānam
prakāsayati tat param

Those however in whom that unwisdom in the Self has been destroyed, to those wisdom shines sunlike as the Ultimate (the Absolute).

The full triumph of wisdom which effectively abolishes its own negative shadow as it were, as implied in the previous verse, is finally stated here in a converse manner. Relativism has no effect at all any more and the knower of *Brahman* (the Absolute) becomes verily Brahman as stated in the *Munduka Upanishad*, III, i, 3. The analogy of the sun is perhaps the nearest in nature where darkness is wholly effaced, but we have to imagine that in the case of wisdom which reaches the ultimate limits of absolutism, darkness itself becomes brilliant with its own non-dual light. This has been finally brought out in Guru Narayana's composition *Arivu* (Wisdom).

The expression *tu* (indeed) taken with *tat param* (after that) has the force of bringing out the contrast between what is said in this and the previous verse

[17] *tadbuddhayas tadatmanas*
tanishthās tatparayanah
gachchhanty apunaravrittim
jnana nirdhuta kalmashah

> Those having That (Absolute) for reasoning, That for the Self, That for finalized discipline, That for supreme goal, they go to a state of final non return, all their (relativistic) dross being cancelled out by wisdom

Apodictic finality of what has been dealt with more discursively or didactically is reached here in almost Upanishadic words A form of expression dear to the Gita is employed here in repeated phrases using the prefix *tat* (that) To take one example, the term *tadbuddhayah* (having that as reasoning) should be understood in the sense that reasoning has attained identity with the Absolute, and not merely as qualifying or conditioning *buddhi* (reason) The same perfect unity of counterparts is implied in the other instances where *tat* is repeated in this long compound expression

The reference to *apunaravritti* (state of final non return) means that all other forms of emancipation understood religiously or theologically, involve relativist *samsara* (cyclic existence) in which return is implied, as mentioned in IX, 21

The Gita takes its stand on absolute emancipation, and discountenances all other forms which belong to the varied *domains of holiness, religion or spirituality, however relatively* superior one or the other might be This verse again underlines what has been stated in IV, 36, that sin itself, which is a notion belonging to religion, is effectively counteracted by wisdom Absolutist wisdom needs no resort to lesser forms of holiness or religious discipline to destroy sin Ritualist Brahminism was supposed to be the weapon held hitherto as effectual against sin But the revaluation here favours wisdom, a position which will be made more explicit in the next verse The word *kalmashah* (dross) does not mean merely sin in the theological sense, but every form of relativistic dregs

[18] *vidya vinaya sampanne*
brahmane gavi hastini
suni chai 'va svapake cha
panditah samadarsinah

In regard to a Brahmin endowed with learning or humility, a cow, an elephant, and even a dog, as also one who cooks dog (for food), the well informed ones (*panditah*) see the same (differenceless reality)

The doctrine of the Gita rises above all forms of holiness or relativist spirituality In any such religious or theological context we know there are all sorts of grades distinguishing man from man on the basis of considerations of virtue or vice, the sacred or profane The *panditah* (well informed ones), as recognized by the Gita, are *samadarsinah* (those who see equality) and not those who see distinctions The list of examples given here include those belonging to the context of the profane, such as the dog eater, and even the holy such as the learned Brahmin, who may be endowed with the rare crowning virtue of humility due to self discipline, the word *vinaya* (humility) meaning also discipline as used in the Buddhist *Tripitaka*

Sacred animals such as the cow and elephant are not omitted, so as to be in keeping with the reference to ' all beings " in verse 15 Equality of castes, it goes without saying, is forcefully implied in this verse, by the reference to the dog eater All are equals in the light of the Absolute

The Brahmin here is just one learned in the *Vedas* as distinct from a *brahmajnani* (knower of the Absolute) who would himself be a representative of the Absolute, and as such unique in a certain sense The dog is a profane animal in the context of the *Vedas* and taboo to a Brahmin

[19] *iahi 'va tair jitah sargo*
yesham samye sthitam manah
nirdesham hi samam brahma
tasmad brahmani te sthitah

Even here creative urges are conquered by those whose minds are balanced in sameness, free from blemish and unitively balanced is indeed the Absolute, therefore such (persons) become grounded in the Absolute.

Further implications of the term *panditah* (the well informed ones) used in the last verse, are indicated here and brought in line with the concept of a full fledged *brahmavid* (knower of the Absolute) mentioned in the next verse, as he is to be described hereafter in the light of the discussion so far Such a *brahmavid* (knower of the Absolute) has not to wait for any emancipation in the distant future The nature of the equality in which he becomes established as indicated in the previous verse, and referred to here also, ensures a certain stability or neutrality between opposing tendencies, by virtue of which he transcends the process of creative flux which belongs to *sargah* (creative urges) This is accomplished here itself

The term *jitah* (conquered) merely means that he conquers the situation mentally, by the expressed use of the word *manah* (mind) Actual immortality is not suggested

The Absolute being itself spotless, poised between opposite tendencies, those whose minds are tuned to it attain to the same balanced neutrality which is its fundamental state Subject and object are equated here as in the *Mundaka Upanishad* III, 1, 3 already referred to

The word *dosham* (defect) is akin to *kalmanashah* (dross) of verse 17, and *pāpam* (sin) of verse 10 The main anxiety of Arjuna as a *purva pakshin* (anterior sceptic), as seen from his own earlier words, is religious scruples concerning sin as seen in I, 45 According to the conclusive doctrine of the Gita seen here, all grades of evil can be transcended here and now by an absolutist attitude which is properly grounded on the teaching of the Gita

Tasmat (therefore) as stated here, might seem to make the attainment of the Absolute too easy an affair requiring only *samatvam* (sameness) but the implications of such an equality are to be understood in the larger context of the teaching of the Upanishads as a whole, and not in any limited sense Equality implies balance of counterparts such as between subject and object, good and bad, etc

[20] *na prahrishyet priyam prapya*
no 'dvijet prapya cha 'priyam
sthirabuddhir asammudho
brahmavid brahmani sthitah

He may not rejoice on good befalling him nor be disturbed on a mishap, stabilized in reason,

delusion free, as knower of the Absolute, firmly established is he in the Absolute

The external characteristics of a man thus established in the Absolute are indicated here He transcends pleasure and pain, *i e*, the horizontal pairs of conflicting values or interests in the relative world That values are here meant is indicated by the words *priyam* (dear) and *apriyam* (repugnant) One balanced between opposites is *sthirabuddhi* (of stabilized reason) and this word is reminiscent of II, 55 and the following verses

The word *asammudho* (undeluded) is put in this negative form because the Absolute is to be known by a process of negation (*neti, neti*! 'not this, not this!'") When all false notions have been removed, the Absolute reveals itself, and is not apprehended as one does ordinary information To transcend duality is tantamount to becoming established in the Absolute, but this quality includes both *dvandva* (external duality or pairs of opposites) and *dvaita* (internal duality understood *sui generis*) No separate act of establishing oneself in the Absolute is to be understood here

The word *brahmavid* (knower of the Absolute), one capable of apprehending the Absolute, marks the first stage of becoming grounded in the Absolute The reader should look out for other stages noted in the Gita as the discussion develops Such *bhumikah* (grounds) are mentioned in the *Yoga Vasishta* and in the *Nirvana Darsinah* of Guru Narayana

[21] *bahyasparseshv asaktatma*
vindaty atmani yat sukham
sa brahmayoga yuktatma
sukham akshayam asnute

That (same) joy which is felt by one in his own Self when he is unattached to outer contacts (such as touch), he whose Self has established unity with the Absolute experiences also never decreasingly

Relinquishing action in terms of external activity, which was hitherto the subject of this Chapter, is now conclusively dealt with in this last section The basis of relinquishment is in discarding external contacts through touch and other senses

Contemplation involves in the first instance introversion applied to the outgoing senses The horses have to be curbed

by proper reins As soon as this curbing is accomplished a new order of consciousness is initiated which is here referred to by the high sounding phrase *brahmayoga* (union with the Absolute)

How such a far reaching effect could be derived from such a simple act as introversion of the senses might leave the reader in doubt but further remarks will clarify the matter Even here however it can be stated that when the objective interests are effaced subjective interests must prevail pro portionately Innate pressures of life can lead to far reaching spiritual attainments when properly canalized In such a reorientation of the spirit disaffiliation from outer interests thus plays an important role

The reference to *bahyasparsa* (outward touch) gives a primary place to the most realistic of sense contacts This is meant to imply all the others

The construction of th s verse follows the same pattern of delicate dialectical revaluation which we have so often referred to and whose flavour is lost in most translations where mechan istic rules of grammar are followed The object of the author is clearly to equate the terms *atma sukham* (joy in the Self) and *brahmayoga yuktatma* (one whose Self has established unity with the Absolute) Of these the former is simple and psy *chological while the latter has its origin in Vedic cosmology* The Gita thus revalues cosmology in terms of psychology and notions such as that of *samnyasa* (renunciation) are examined in the sober and critical light of a *sastra* (scientific text)

The expression *akshayam* (never decreasing) marks the non relativist nature of the joy thus giving it the same absolutist character as in the unitive state of mind referred to in the latter half of this verse

[22] *ye hi samsparsaja bhoga*
duhkhayonaya eva te
adyantavantah kaunteya
na teshu ramate budhah

Those contact born pleasures indeed are the sources (wombs) of pain having a beginning and an end O Son of Kunti (Arjuna) the wise man does not take pleasure in them

The converse of the last verse is stated here in order to underline negatively the same verity Values are spoken of in

Vedanta as *nitya* (lasting or eternal) and *anitya* (passing, transitory) Transitory values are the cause of suffering, *i e*, they are *duhkhayonaya* (of the womb of suffering), and the physical, objective or real contact established with the external world lies at the root of suffering The wise man avoids cultivating such contact born values by refusing to be happy in them The same subject was referred to in II, 14 Endurance of suffering was what was recommended there, while here it is the avoidance of indulgence in pleasurable elements of the sense level by a man of wisdom which is advocated This difference is due to the fact that such values as heat or cold are fixed by physiological laws while the interests under discussion here are such that they allow some room for choice

[23] *saknoti 'hai 'va yah sodhum*
prak sarira vimokshanat
kamakrodhodbhavam vegam
sa yuktah sa sukhi narah

He who is able to experience undisturbed here itself, before liberation from the body, that impulse arising out of desire and hatred, he is the unified and he is the happy man

The same is stated in more commonplace language as applicable to an ordinary man, here called *narah* (plain man, male person), without the embellishments of holiness or unusual wisdom There may also be a play on the word as representing Arjuna as distinguished from Nara or Narayana, " the rare person " a name for Krishna The simple requirement for a man to be happy is to experience or bear with an attitude of neutrality, that impulse arising out of desire and anger

The *sukhi* (happy man) or the *yuktah* (the unified, the yogi) are treated on a par, and the happiness and unitive life implied in these words are conceived in terms of *iha eva* (here itself), and before the dropping of the body

[24] *yo ntahsukho 'ntararamas*
tatha ntarjyotir eva yah
sa yogi brahmanirvanam
brahmabhuto dhigachchhati

He of inward happiness whose inner life is free and easy and likewise of inward brilliance, he also of unitive understanding he having become the Absolute enters the self effacement of the Absolute

A composite picture of a person who has relinquished acts as well as external contacts is repeated here and in the following verses not in a matter of fact style as hitherto but in a more sublime language *Pure and practical considerations are* blended

The inner life of a yogi which is both brilliant and blissful both wise and happy is here equated to the Absolute The various synonyms applicable to a man of the highest spiritual attainment are all ranged here and treated as if they were interchangeable

Yogic *samadhi* (sublime unitive peace) Buddhistic *nirvana* (final self effacement) and Upanishadic *brahmabhutah* (becoming one with the Absolute) are all successively suggested in this verse

[25] *labhante brahmanirvanam*
rishayah kshinakalmashah
chhinnadvaidha yatatmanah
sarvabhutahite ratah

Seers their evils weakened cutting themselves away from conflicting pairs of interests who are self controlled who are ever kindly disposed to all beings attain to self effacement (*nirvana*) in the Absolute (*brahman*)

Other miscellaneous concepts pertaining to the spiritual life prevailing in ancient India are also brought into focus The *rishi* (Vedic seer or sage) and the *yatatmanah* (those of self control) are mentioned here side by side with *sarvabhutahite ratah* (those ever kindly disposed to all beings) which latter must also include Buddhist or Jaina spiritual values All of them attain *brahmanirvana* (self effacement in the Absolute) *The effective weakening of evil in them is the common factor* The only condition introduced in the Gita for all such types is that they should be *chhinnadvaidha* (those who have cut off pairs of opposite interests) *It is not advaita (non duality)* which is implied here but rather *the transcending of the*

dvandva (pairs of relatively opposite factors) This is more in keeping with the context, although non duality cannot be held altogether irrelevant

[26] *kāma krodha viyuktānam*
yatīnām yatachetasām
abhito brahmanirvānam
vartate viditatmanām

To those disjoined from desire and anger, those self controlled ones whose vital consciousness is subdued, (who are also) knowers of the Self, self effacement in the Absolute lies near at hand

The sober teaching normal to the Gita is continued here This verse plainly states that self control brings men near to the Absolute through the knowledge of the Self Glamorous trimmings and embellishments describing the exalted state of the yogi are abandoned To be swayed by opposing likes and dislikes is here indicated as the greatest impediment to Self-realization Self control itself has to be understood as that neutrality which has so often been insisted upon

Chetas (vital outward flowing consciousness) is more than just mere mind, the element of living volition being greater This reference to the mind that seeks outward relations instead of mere *manas* (mind) paves the way to the meditation indicated in the next two verses

[27] *sparsan kritvā bahir bahyams*
chakshus cai 'va 'ntare bhruvoh
pranapanau samau kritva
nasabhyantaracharinau

[28] *yatendriya mano bhuddhir*
munir mokshaparayanah
vigatechchha bhaya krodha
yah sada mukta eva sah

Having peripherally discarded outward factors (such as touch,) and also with eyes fixed between the eyebrows, equalizing the positive (outward *prana*) and negative (inward *apana*) vital tendencies moving within the nasal orifice

with the senses, mind and reason controlled, the silent recluse (*muni*) wholly intent on liberation, with desire, fear, and anger gone, is ever himself, the liberated one

The subject of detachment consistently developed in this Chapter is brought to its culminating point, naturally leading up to the subject matter of the next Chapter, which deals with sustained meditation This latter would mark a more positive stage than mere relinquishment of action or detachment from the outer world, implied here at the end of this Chapter

The outward rejection referred to in the initial line of verse 27 is radical and drastic The fixing of the eyes between the eyebrows is to indicate a certain intense unitive concentration

The reference to breath moving within the nasal orifice implies a revised form of *pranayama* (restraint of vital breaths or functionings), where centralizing or neutralizing of vital tendencies are envisaged All these are intended to revise more unitively the yoga according to Patanjali where vestiges of Sāmkhya duality still persist, as we have pointed out under IV, 29 The meaning we have given of the vital breath moving within the nasal orifice is preferable to one in which the two nostrils are referred to The gaze of the yogi is to be directed to the tip of the nose (see VI, 13) though the *puraka* (filling) and *rechaka* (emptying) of Patanjali s *pranayama* (restraint of vital functions) bring into play one nostril after another In *kumbhaka* (restraining) however, both breaths are equally involved A sort of neutral restraint of both vital tendencies and breaths seems to be treated without distinction in the yogic discipline of the Gita This seems to be evident when the indications in the different Chapters referred to above are taken together Neutrality between opposites is the key of yoga throughout the Gita Even Patanjali has a passing reference to this neutral state in the *Yoga Sutras*, II, 51

In verse 28 the question of personal salvation is more evident than in verse 27 by the use of the phrase *moksha-parayanah* (one wholly intent on liberation)

Sada mukta eva sah (he is ever himself the liberated one) makes the personified reference expressly pointed, as a counterpart of what is referred to in the next and concluding verse of this Chapter, where the Absolute is itself referred to with exalted personal attributes

[29] *bhoktaram yajnatapasam*
sarvaloka mahesvaram
suhridam sarvabhutanam
jnatva mam santim richchhati

Having known Me as the Enjoyer of ritual sacrifices, the Acceptor of austerities, the great Lord of all worlds, and the Friend of all beings, one reaches peace.

All the ways in which the Absolute is understood in the contexts of sacrifice, discipline, theology and kind bounty, so far covered in the previous Chapters, are here brought together as being conducive to peace

Before the Gita becomes more fully philosophical, these miscellaneous loose ends as it were, of the subject-matter, such as reconciling reason and faith, are gathered together, clearing the stage for a more thorough going treatment

ity srimad bhagavadgitasupanishatsu brahmavidyayam
yogasastre srikrishnarjunasamvade
karmasamnyasayogo nama panchamo 'dhyayah

Thus ends in the Upanishads of the Songs of God, in the Science of the Wisdom of the Absolute, in the Dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, the Fifth Chapter entitled Unitive Action and Renunciation

CHAPTER VI

UNITIVE CONTEMPLATION

Dhyana Yoga

HAVING revalued aspects of discipline and religious life as actually found in India and brought them into accord with a revised notion of yoga, a new phase of the discussion is begun

In the first section, the same topics of renunciation, action and yoga are also treated The discussion passes on to the subject of the Self, and how aspects of the Self can enter into conflict or be harmonized with each other Then follow detailed indications regarding yogic postures, breathing etc, with a general description of the yogi This section culminates in a new definition of yoga The necessity for practice for gradual progress in yoga is emphasized, but it is also declared that mere affiliation to the Absolute is a saving power in itself Thus sin and grace are, as it were, balanced or cancelled out in such an affiliated person

To give nominal unity to all these topics has evidently been difficult and this is clear from the different titles by which this Chapter has been known in various editions It has been called Adhyatma Yoga (Dealing with the Self Unitively), Ātmasamyama Yoga (Self Subdual treated Unitively) and, more usually, Dhyana Yoga (Unitive Contemplation) While good enough as referring to one or other of the sections and subjects, the unity of the Chapter lies deeper than the topics themselves

Instead of suffering being a basic concept for discussion there is here a note of hope and the possibility of escape from suffering suggested through a somewhat revised theory of reincarnation

The picture of the yogi in meditation, even in somewhat conventional detail is outlined, and the way of the yogi extolled as better than others, and best when the yogi has the Absolute as his own counterpart What is recommended is a wholesale global and personal bi polar affiliation to the Absolute

Sribhagavan uvacha

[1] *anasritah karmaphalam*
karyam karma karoti yah
sa samnyasi cha yogi cha
na niragnir na cha kriyah

Krishna said
Without depending on the results of action, he who does necessary action, he is a renouncer (*samnyasi*) and also a contemplative (*yogi*), not he who has (merely) given up sacrificial fire, or who (merely) abstains from ritualist (or other) action

Heterodox tendencies opposed to Vedic ritualism gave rise to a type of religious men who were known as *samnyasins* (renouncers) Their first act of protest was to shave their heads and remove the tuft of hair so essential in the context of ritualistic Vedism for the attainment of *svarga* (heaven) They also refused to offer burnt sacrifices to the gods, and so such a person is called here *niragnih* (one of no fire)

In the course of the religious history of India this negative attitude has been subjected to various revaluations Such type as the *digambara* (having the directions of space for clothing the stark naked gymnosophists of ancient Greece), the *svetambara* (white clad) and the *pitambara* (yellow clad) have various other subdivisions depending upon Jaina, Buddhist, Vaishnava and Shaivite influences too numerous to catalogue The Gita here revises and fuses together the ritualist and the renouncer in terms of yoga or dialectical wisdom

At the very outset here mere negation is discredited Out of the positive attitudes remaining when negative ones are discarded, there are two major alternatives before the spiritual aspirant, that of the non ritualist who still has hopes or aspirations of a positive order, and that of the yogi who is not opposed to ritual but treats it as merely incidental to his own necessary life He does not consider ritual as a means for ends lying outside the scheme of spirituality Here the yogi has at least as noble and idealistic aspirations as the renouncer in the revised sense The ends on which his mind is fixed approximate to the highest Good of Plato The yogi is more of a realist making allowances for an organically conceived process of spiritual development

Disaffiliation from values which are not in keeping with the highest Good is common to both the renouncer and the yogi when the revision suggested in the Gita is effected The *samnyasin* becomes more realistic and the yogi more idealistic than what they were ordinarily supposed to be

What is attempted in the Gita here is a double edged revaluation A person who is both a *samnyasin* and a yogi, avoiding negative attitudes, is here portrayed Thus both terms here refer to the same new person

The word *anasritah* (independent of) as applied to the result or end of action is familiar to us already in II, 47 and 48 Not being particularly interested in actual benefits to himself of any activity is an attitude tending towards freedom Such an undercurrent of activity as remains only belongs to Nature

The expression *karyam karma* (necessary work) marks the other limit of action opposite to the merely contingent

It is not the label which makes any actual difference between individuals calling themselves *samnyasin* or yogi The man who calls himself an anti ritualist might be submitting unconsciously to ritualism in institutional forms A man who is labelled a ritualist might not be hedonistically minded

Going beyond mere labels the Gita recommends a more organic way in which the two types tend to coalesce thus abolishing merely mechanistic types or patterns of holy men whose recognition would divide society into narrow groups and possibly discredit the whole subject of contemplation

[2] *yam samnyasam iti prahur*
yogam tam viddhi pandava
na hy asamnyastasamkalpo
yogi bhavati kaschana

That which people call renunciation (*samnyasa*) know that to be yoga O Pāndava (Arjuna) one who has not given up his wilful desires for particularized ends never indeed becomes a yogi

The distinction that might still remain between a *samnyasin* and a yogi is further discussed from the converse point of view with the object of minimising the differences between them in the same manner as Samkhya and Yoga are equated in V 4 and 5

The first line says they ought to be the same, and the second line says that without some form of relinquishment there is no true yogi

Samkalpa (will involving personal intentions for particular desired effects) must be shunned both by the *samnyasin* and the yogi The usual yogi tends to retain too many desires as natural or necessary and the usual *samnyasin* tends to live in a vacuum without any of the natural outlets for his energies The *via media* between the two is again upheld in this verse In the last verse the *samnyasin* was equated to the yogi and in this verse the yogi is equated to the *samnyasin*

As the yogi relinquishes wilful attachment to particularized ends, to that extent he is therefore also a *samnyasin* or renouncer

[3] *arurukshor muner yogam*
karma karanam uchyate
yogarudhasya tasyai va
samah karanam uchyate

The yoga of a man of self control who is still an aspirant for it is said to have action as its motive principle (*karana*), for the same person, when he has ascended to the unitive state (yoga), tranquillity is said to be its motive principle

The spiritual life is often mechanistically imagined to be of a uniformly steady progress Such a view leaves out of account the organic reciprocal and ambivalent factors which make up the human personality Instinct and intelligence, emotion and reason, action and renunciation, like Samkhya and Yoga, are reciprocal aspects of the alternating process called spiritual progress

At a certain phase the pressures of necessity are strong, at another time they become weak Then contingent factors supersede The child, for example, has need for activity for self expression and for the development of its personality Games are natural for youth, while old age is immersed in pensive moods rather than overt activities

These tendencies which alternate and change over may be said to operate in the biological or at best in a psycho-physical field referred to as the libido or psyche Personality and the soul are terms applying to deeper seats of consciousness, where

the ambivalence is less evident, though in principle still there Verses 3 and 4 imply this theory, verse 3 referring to more outward factors and verse 4 to more internal ones

The present verse deals with the yogi aspirant who, like a cyclist going uphill, has to keep pedalling The same yogi, when he has passed the highest point of the ascending road of yoga, changes over to quieter ways

The expression *tasya eva* (of even the same person) is important because it makes unmistakable reference to the ambivalence Opposing tendencies are found in the same person. They are not to be looked upon as if belonging to distinct persons as, for example, when some might say that a *kshattriya* (warrior) is born for action only Arjuna himself would at one moment be a yogi aspirant giving importance to action, and again, when the ascending phase of yoga has been crossed, the same Arjuna could give up all activity and remain quiet

The theory of the Gita thus cuts across the much spoken of *adhikara bheda* (difference of caste rights) This should not be taken to mean that action and inaction can be practised together in any mechanistic sense That would imply a contradiction so justly rejected by Sankara in many places as *jnana karma samucchchhaya* (the mixing of wisdom and action) The necessary action of the early stages is a springboard only for perfect detachment from sense objects, and for the action possible to the *yogarudha* (one who has ascended in yoga) to be described in the next verse The term *karma karana* (having action as origin or motive-principle) as applied to the yogi who is still an aspirant, suggests this relation only The word *uchyate* (is said to be) as applied to the two phases, indicates that the theory of ambivalence is not a cardinal part of the Gita teaching proper but that responsibility for it is put on the experts who had such notions at the time of the Gita

[4] *yada hi na indriyartheshu*
na karmasv anushajjate
sarva samkalpa samnyasi
yogarudhas tado chyate

When however, neither in the objects of the senses nor in actions one finds attachment such a man who has renounced wilful desires for particularized ends is said to be one who has ascended to yoga

Two conditions of detachment are referred to here as required for one to be called *yogarudha* (one ascended in yoga) Sense objects should not attract him and activities should not interest him The individual will is made innocuous or neutralized To that extent *samkalpa* (wilful desire for particularized ends) may be said to have been renounced It is in this revised sense that the notion of renunciation is accepted by the Gita and put on a par with the status of a *yogarudha* (one ascended in yoga) Ascent in yoga is not so much something culminating in a supreme effort as might be suggested in other books but in the Gita which is a *yoga sastra* (a scientific textbook on unitive discipline), it consists rather in neutralizing opposing tendencies, where no effort at all is involved even in its last stages Intentions actions and the attractions of sense objects have merely to be discarded for a man to attain the highest in yoga as understood here

[5] *uddhared atmana tmanam*
na tmanam avasadayet
atmai va hy atmano bandhur
atmai va ripur atmanah

By the Self the Self must be upheld the Self should not be let down the Self indeed is (its own) dear relative the Self indeed is the enemy of the Self

As he is understood in this Chapter the perfect yogi is described in this verse and those that follow up to verse 9 We say this Chapter because although the whole or global personality is here the basis of discussion there still persists a certain dualistic treatment of certain factors of the personality as we have shown in verse 3

The Self is spoken of as having two symmetrical counterparts one as important as the other In an earlier Chapter however the asymmetry between the two counterparts was more pronounced as implied in the examples given in III 38

However the Self referred to in this verse is almost an interchangeable term with the other Self mentioned side by side with it One can be interposed for the other to give as good a meaning in terms of the global personality which throughout forms the subject matter of the whole Chapter

[6] *bandhur atma 'tmanas tasya*
yena 'tmai 'va 'tmana jitah
anatmanas tu satrutve
varteta 'tmai 'va satruvat

> The Self is dear to one (possessed) of Self, by whom even the Self by the Self has been won, for one not (possessed) of Self, the Self would be in conflict with the very Self, as if an enemy

The statement in verse 5 is elaborated There are alternative situations presented here together The first is unitive, the second dual because of non-contemplation The second case is one of self conflict called here *satrutva* (enmity) Equal status of the two selves is evident from the expressions *anātmanah* (he of non Self) and *satruvat* (as if an enemy) The implication is that in the latter the real or unitive Self by its conflict with its supposed counterpart becomes virtually an enemy, and in the former expression that the unconquered or non unified Self has no reality worth mentioning at all

[7] *jitatmanah prasantasya*
paramatma samahitah
sitoshna sukha duhkheshu
tatha manapamanayoh

> To one of conquered Self who rests in peace the Supreme (*paramatma*) is in a state of neutral balance in heat cold happiness suffering, honour-disgrace

The duality between Self and non Self is abolished here in the name of *paramatma* (the Absolute Self) *Jitatmanah* (for one of conquered Self)—there is no question of conflict arising He is therefore at peace through a balance of counterparts This is to be inferred from the three examples given, which cover simple reflex actions affecting the Self and those touching subtler personal values such as fame and dishonour

The different interpretations and discussions which have raged around the word *paramatmā* (the Absolute Self) between the theists, dualists and advaitins have arisen because they have all tried to interpret the text in accordance with mechanistic reasoning *That the Absolute is by its very nature* a unity attained by cancelling counterparts and that this

conviction depends more upon intuition than upon reason, is what has been forgotten by most commentators

[8] *jnana vijnana triptatma*
kutastho vijitendriyah
yukta ity uchyate yogi
sama loshta sma kanchanah

One whose Self is satisfied by wisdom (synthetic) and knowledge (analytic), established in unchanging immobility, who has gained full control over sense attachments, that yogi is said to be unified, one to whom a lump of earth, a stone and gold are the same

The ultimate term in perfection in yoga is clarified in this verse under three degrees, taking forms of matter for analogy A clod of earth, a stone and gold have different uses or values, the one of least utility being the lump of earth, and the one whose value goes beyond that of mere matter being the gold In between is the rock representing solidity as a value

Corresponding to these three values are the three aspects of yogic spirituality mentioned in the first line There is first the man who has gathered his thoughts into a certain compact unity as in a clod of earth the unity still intellectual being of the first degree Such a man of unitive thought brings together *jnana* and *vijnana* (synthetic and analytic, or pure and practical wisdom or wisdom itself and knowledge)

The second degree is referred to by the term *kutastha* (rock established) It is sometimes interpreted to mean being seated on a high place suggesting superiority But the more cogent philosophical meaning suggests immobility, uniformity, being unchangeable and universally the same Unity here is a more accomplished fact than the merely intellectual academic notion of the earlier epithet

When the third stage is reached there is a change in the personality analogous to the changing of base metal into noble gold

The expression *sama* (equal) however, abolishes even these differences of degree suggested in the examples and, taken together with the word *triptatma* (one of Self satisfaction) shows that the perfect yogi remains unconcerned even with regard to values which the world might attach to him He is

sufficient unto himself and does not compare himself with others

The reference to *jnana* (wisdom) as the first requirement of yoga is the special contribution of the Gita, whose method consists of equating wisdom with action

[9] *suhrin mitrar yudasina—*
madhyastha dveshya bandhushu
sadhushv api cha papeshu
samabuddhir visishyate

> As between dear well wishers, friends, enemies, those indifferent, those in between, haters, relations, and also as between good people and sinners, he who can maintain an equal attitude, excels

The yogi is not a socialized individual Society is divided into high and low classes or groups based on relativistic considerations Family affiliations involve the distinction between relations and strangers etc Affiliation to a country involves compatriots, foreigners and neutrals Moral and religious affiliations involve the righteous and the unrighteous The yogi being an absolutist, has nothing to do with any of these

This verse is reminiscent of v, 18 but here instead of varieties of holiness we have grades of society The sense of equality is therefore pushed one step further into real relations of everyday life

(10) *yogi yunjita satatam*
atmanam rahasi sthitah
ekaki yatachittatma
nirasir aparigrahah

> The yogi should constantly gather his own Self unitively, established in a place where he can be by himself, alone with relational mind and Self under control, without expectations and without possessive (intentions)

Verses 10 to 15 revert back to the subject of verse 3 where it was stated that action was the means for an aspiring yogi Action here may be said to include certain recognized practices, more or less covering yoga as understood in such works

as Patanjali s *Yoga Sutras* But here it is restated without, however, omitting detailed directions about posture and place etc., such as have always been traditionally associated with the practice of yoga In so far as they are harmless they have been retained here, to help the orthodox mind from disaffiliation through any abrupt disruption Hence also the detailed reference to deerskin and grass in verse 11 becomes natural and understandable

In the first place the practice of yoga has to be of unbroken continuity as suggested by the word *satatam* (always) Broken or interrupted practice fails to accumulate the necessary momentum. The word *rahasi* (in secret) is to liberate the individual from social or other class conditionings It does not necessarily mean an unpopulated place, though such a place ordinarily would of course be preferable The word *ekaki* (alone) stresses the same requirement, because yoga is not the same as organized religion or congregational worship It is rather a flight of the alone to the Alone A true Christian also is asked to pray by himself (see *Matthew* vi, 6)

The phrase *yatachittatma* (he of controlled rational will and self) should be understood in the sense that the Self has been brought into unity as mentioned in verse 5 and that *chitta* (the relational will or mind) which is always establishing a relation with external objects or desires has been curbed, as discussed in v, 26 and elsewhere

The term *nirasih* (without expectation) just means that the yogi does not wait for any favourable event to happen to him in the future *Aparigrahah* (non possessive) releases the yogi from the tension of thinking of getting something which is a natural disposition commonly found in man When the mind is thus released from horizontal affiliations, the ascent in yoga becomes facilitated

[11] *suchau dese pratishthapya*
sthiram asanam atmanah
na tyuchchhritam na tinicham
chaila jina kusottaram

[12] *tatrai kagram manah kritva*
yata chittendriya kriyah
upavisya sane yunjyad
yogam atma visuddhaye

> Having established firmly in a clean place a seat for himself, one neither too high nor too low, and covered respectively with cloth, skin and grass
>
> there having made the mind one pointed and with relational mind and sense functions subdued, (duly) taking his place on his seat, let him unitively engage in yoga for transparent Self consciousness

The reference to cleanliness in the expression *suchau dese* (in a clean place) occurs again in verse 41, where it is said that a man of good actions will be born in a clean house Popular spirituality we know, bristles with taboos obligations and bans But the Gita does not refer to such at all, its theory being conceived on an open rational basis Hence this reference to a clean place as against any auspicious or ceremoniously holy place

The word *sthiram* (firm) can apply both to the stability of the seat as well as to independent possession of the seat, ensuring its undisturbed availability for some length of time The word *atmanah* (his own) points to the same meaning, and not to possession as property

The medium height to be recommended is to be understood as conforming merely to the requirement in yoga of avoiding extremes in all matters yoga itself being understood to be a sort of middle ground

The indications about cloth deerskin and grass, have no basis elsewhere in yoga practice These items might refer to the three distinct growths of spirituality in vogue in India which the Gita in its revaluation evidently attempts to recon cile and bring together as implied in words such as *yajna dana tapas* (sacrifice gift austerity) which are three distinct religious expressions The black antelope is associated with the pre historic Siva who is pictured in mythology as chasing antelopes (see Kalidasa s *Sakuntala* opening scene) Ascetics always carry a skin The reference to cloth is to the raiment of a *samnyasin* (renouncer) or *bhikku* (Buddhist monk) or *svetambara* (white clad Jaina holy man) The intention is to fuse together different symbols of spirituality into one fresh and forceful current in which all can unite in a more catholic spirit

Detailed injunctions of this kind cater to the insistent demands for them on the part of the general body of aspirants

in the spiritual world, who are unlikely to be satisfied if they are told that it is meditation only that matters. Most religious people like to be told something definite to practise with fidelity; otherwise they feel lost.

However, the items mentioned are harmless and perhaps necessary for retaining animal electricity while a person is in meditation. Sitting on a rock, for instance, would be harmful for the body, hence these indications may be considered even rational

The term *ekagram* (one-pointed) does not necessarily mean concentration on any specific object such as a crystal as is sometimes suggested by occultists. The meaning will become justified when read alongside verse 25 where it is more specifically stated that one should think of nothing at all, a certain blankness or freedom from focussed thought being what is implied The one-pointedness therefore refers to the unitive character of the state of mind of the yogi and is quite different from concentration on any object or idea. The same unitive attitude is referred to in II, 41.

The state of the yogi who is introverted in the social way indicated here and the *ātmavisuddhi* (transparent Self-consciousness) of the Self—which should not be mistaken for *chittasuddhi* (purification of the relational mind) to be attained by action —should be understood in the light of the conquest of the Self in verses 5 and 6 Any taint of ego or conflict in the Self is the dross here which is to be got rid of by the practice of unitive thinking The result of such meditation is along the lines indicated in v, 24.

[13] *samam kāyasirogrivam*
dhārayann achalam sthirah
samprekshya nāsikāgram svam
disas cha 'navalokayan

[14] *prasāntātmā vigatabhir*
brahmachārivrate sthitah
manah samyamya machchitto
yukta asita matparah

With body, head and neck held evenly and in immobile poise, looking at one's nose-tip and not perceiving the (actual) directions (of space)

with the Self tranquilized, with fear gone, established in the vow of a *brahmachari* (aspirant walking in the way of the Absolute), having mind subdued, related to Me through contemplative thought, he may sit, united, having Me for his supreme goal

An even posture is recommended When the vertebral column is straight the other bones of the skeletal frame are supported with a symmetry and poise Aches and pains in the body due to distorted postures tend to be minimized The requirements of the very elaborate *asanas* (postures) forming the greater portion of *hatha yoga* (literally "forced" or 'violent' yoga, consisting of arduous physical practices) which are so often exaggerated, are all comprised and summedup in the directions contained in this verse

The term *sthirah* (firm) here applies to the posture which should be properly poised and immobile A degree of natural relaxation rather than tension is suggested here

The gaze at the tip of the nose has nothing to do with actual looking at any direction It guarantees a certain subjectivity and also alertness which are the distinguishing features of the well known *mudra* (psycho physical gesture or sign) known as *khechari* (lit 'void moving'), the third condition associated with this attitude, of turning the tip of the tongue to touch the soft palate behind the uvula being omitted here

The vow of a *brahmacharin* (one oriented to the Absolute, who walks in the way of the Absolute) is a much talked of subject in Indian spirituality Severe requirements of sex-repression and celibacy are often associated with the vow, but the exaggeration and prominence given to mere continence is to be traced to the general taboo on sex in most religious sentiment When we consider, however, that Vedic religion includes *kama* (desire) as one of the four *purusharthas* (principal ends of human life), the sex taboo should not be taken too drastically or unnaturally

In monastic religions such as Christianity and Buddhism the taboo on sex tends to be very severe The four *ashramas* (stages of spiritual life) are organically conceived, and *brahmacharya* (life of the dedicated student who moves in the way of the Absolute), or more commonly studenthood which is the first stage, leads to *grihasthya* (stage of the householder) where sex is normal

True *brahmacharya* (moving in the path of the Absolute) is a vow applying to the whole of life and passes through the different *ashramas* (stages of spiritual life) as a constant attitude of mind, effecting the transition from one stage to another as normally as possible The vow as understood here should therefore be taken to mean a way of life into which sex is not an obtrusive factor The wilful repression of sex as a taboo is not what is here implied

Verse 17, we should note, makes allowances for harmless pleasures or recreation, and is neither severe nor austere Likewise in VII, 11, *kama* (desire) itself is identified with the Absolute when it does not offend righteousness, and in X, 28, *kandarpah* (the god of love, Eros) is included as a manifestation of the Absolute In this present specific case, where a vow is mentioned, it would be legitimate however, to think of *brahmacharya* (moving in the way of the Absolute) as a strict discipline involving continence One should beware however, of the tendency to make this spiritual stage a sort of bogey or fetish to frighten innocent persons or adolescents which pretenders to spirituality often do with a view to their exploitation Such distortions and exaggerated notions of this vow are likely to do more harm than good

Definitions of *brahmacharya* as found in Yajnavalkya which ban all sex in thought, word and action are quite in place in a *dharma sastra* (code of social laws) whose norms are public and therefore rigidly conceived But a certain latitude is evident when we read that according to the *Maha Bharata* a person having sexual intercourse with his wife is still a *brahmachari* (see Radhakrishnan s *Bhagavadgita*, pp 197 8)

The vow here has to be fitted into a general contemplative context

The expressions *machchitto* (related to Me through contemplative thought) and *matparah* (having Me for Supreme) are favourite forms in the Gita, side by side with expressions like *manmanas* (having Me for your mind) in XVIII, 64 All are intended to establish an intimate identity between the subject and the object, the yogi and the Absolute, through bipolarity

[15] *yunjann evam sada 'tmanam*
yogi niyata manasah
santim nirvana paramam
matsamstham adhigachchhati

> Thus unitively joining ever the Self, the yogi whose mind is subdued enters into that peace which abides in Me, which has as its ultimate phase total effacement (*nirvana*).

Practical hints having been enumerated in the previous verses, the goal of yoga is now stated to be the same as the supreme *nirvana (total effacement) spoken of in more rationalist* schools, and on the other hand that the goal is not different from the union of the Self with the Absolute. Further, the peace of the Absolute is here said to abide in Krishna as personally representing the Absolute. This personal reference, often mistaken for theism, is a doctrine of the Gita which is valid even philosophically in impersonal non-theistic terms. The man-god or the god-man are interchangeable terms, and when a bipolar relation is established with the Absolute, personal attributes have no longer any validity. In fact Krishna himself objects to his own personalization in VII 24 and IX 11. Even in Chapter XI where his form is revealed to Arjuna, the description is far from conforming to any theistic personality. Here there is no devotee reaching to a god, but a yogi entering into the peace of the Absolute.

The yoga consists of unitively abolishing conflict between aspects of the Self as in the rest of the Chapter. The qualification *niyatamanasah* (one of subdued mind) is a secondary requirement only, the main thing being control of the Self by the Self.

[16]
na 'tyasnatas tu yogo 'sti
na chai 'kantam anasnatah
na cha 'tisvapnasilasya
jagrato nai 'va cha 'rjuna

> To be sure there is no yoga for a glutton nor for one who fasts, nor even, O Arjuna, is it either for one who over-sleeps or wakes.

Extremes of eating, fasting, sleeping and waking are to be avoided. Yoga outside the Gita is often understood to be a rigorous discipline involving much self-immolation or harsh austerities. *This verse and the next are meant to allay all* doubts in this matter. It is the middle path which is recommended.

[17] *yuktāhāra vihārasya*
yukta cheshtasya karmasu
yukta svapnāvabodhasya
yogo bhavati duhkhahā

To one of proper food (habits) and recreation, who engages in activities in proper moderation, who sleeps and wakes in a well-regulated way, yoga takes its course painlessly.

Here there are no Stoic or Epicurean extremes. We should understand the word *yukta* (united) as meaning what is proper and natural without exercising any voluntary acceptance or rejection. This applies to food, recreation and other natural activities, as also to sleeping and waking. Extremes being thus avoided, spiritual life becomes easy and free from that pain which is so often endured when one-sided theories prevail.

The word *vihāra* (amusement or recreation) does not mean outright merrymaking, but allows for natural outlets, including perhaps country excursions. The *dukha* (pain) does not refer to the religious doctrine of suffering as in Buddhism, but to the pain implied in religious disciplines when understood one-sidedly.

[18] *yadā viniyatam chittam*
ātmany evā 'vatishthate
nihsprihah sarva kāmebhyo
yukta ity uchyate tadā

When the subdued relational mind stays in the Self itself, desireless of all desires, then (it) is said to be united.

The state of a yogi does not refer to anything outside the Self of the yogi. Even the Absolute, if it is considered extraneous, is irrelevant to the yoga understood in this and the next verse.

The *chitta* (relational mind) stays within the limits of the Self. All desirable objects are outside its scope. When such a condition exists, we can call that the state of a yogi.

[19] *yathā dīpo nivātastho*
ne 'ngate so 'pamā smritā

yogino yatachittasya
yunjato yogam atmanah

As a lamp set in a windless place does not flicker, such a simile is thought of in regard to a yogi who *has brought under restraint his (relational) mind*, (ever) uniting thus in the union of the Self

The simile here *is not just one among many others* The idea of yoga is here pushed to its purest and furthermost meaning, where duality is completely effaced The word yoga itself implies a duality, but the comparison consciously employed and so referred to here as a simile, is meant finally to abolish any duality between object and subject of union as may be implied in the word yoga The unflickering flame just keeps burning on steadily A flame that flickers has on one hand the flame itself and on the other hand the wind which makes its flicker, as something extraneous In a windless place, however, where the extraneous factors causing the flickering are absent, the flame just burns on The establishment of unity is a similar state It requires only the removal of what is extraneous to the situation Perfect yoga is unitiveness in the Self, of the Self and by the Self The subtle distinction brought out by this example has more than casual interest

[20] *yatro 'paramate chittam*
niruddham yogasevaya
yatra chai 'va 'tmana 'tmanam
pasyann atmani tushyati

(That state) where the (relational) mind attains tranquillity, restrained through continued cultivation of a yogic attitude, and where also the Self by the Self in the Self enjoys happiness,

Verses 20 to 23 inclusive form one sentence It is an attempt to give definitive indications regarding the characteristics of yoga resulting *from the discussions in the previous Chapters* The sublime eloquence of these verses add a poetic quality which has its own grandeur

The culminating verse 23 contains the finalized statement in the form of a consciously formulated definition Together these verses constitute a challenge even to modern scientific

men who might sneer at subjects like yoga as being vague or based on mere sentiment.

Verse 20 marks the first stage of progress in yoga. There is change of interest when restraint is applied to the outgoing tendencies. According to Patanjali's definition yoga consists mainly in this restraint, and the *yoga seva* (literally "service", continued cultivation of a yogic attitude) consequently constitutes the major part of the discipline. The element of joy or satisfaction suggested by the phrase *tushyati* (enjoys happiness) indicates something more than attaining a neutral state. The Self finding joy in the Self by the Self is an elaboration of what has been said in the previous verse. A state of self-sufficiency is what is suggested. The mind that is constantly irritated never quiets down, self-satisfied.

[21] *sukham ātyantikam yat tad*
buddhigrāhyam atindriyam
vetti yatra na chai 'vā 'yam
sthitas chalati tattvatah

—that which cognizes the ultimate limit of happiness which can be grasped by reason and goes beyond the senses, and wherein also established, there is no more swerving from the true principle;

A further stage is marked here, one of positive happiness. Yoga is stated without the undue transcendental exaggeration which is so common. Even "going beyond the senses" is counteracted at once by the phrase *buddhigrāhyam* (what can be grasped by reason). Contemplation in the Gita is sober and free from ideas of exalted trance or over-depressed or morose agony.

The expression *tattvatah* (from the true principle) points to the same philosophical way of looking at yoga. Well-founded philosophical vision, when it has a steadying effect, has in it the element of yoga, or conversely, yoga is a steadying factor in philosophy. Whereas in verse 20 the joy consisted in just freedom from agitation, here more intellectual values are implied.

[22] *yam labdhvā cha 'param lābham*
manyate nā 'dhikam tatah
yasmin sthito na duhkhena
gurunā 'pi vichālyate

—and which, having obtained, there is no other gain thought of which could be greater (in value), in which when established, there is no swerving even by heavy suffering,

Yoga is now described as a high value capable of establishing an absorbing interest which can hold its own against all other interests possible to man The character of this supreme value is brought out negatively by reference to suffering A man established in yoga would not be affected even by suffering that might be called serious, such as illness, bereavement, loss, etc.

[23] *tam vidyad duhkhasamyoga—*
viyogam yogasamjnitam
sa nischayena yoktavyo
yogo nirvinnachetasa

—that should be known by the name of yoga—disaffiliation from the context of suffering Such a yoga should be adhered to with determination free from spiritual regret

Yoga is defined here in its most general terms It consists simply of disaffiliation from the context of suffering through a certain inward detachment where, as we have seen, the senses, mind, relational thought and finally, the Self itself instead of moving peripherally towards objects or activities, become gathered together and centralized

Suffering is transcended in a double sense, it is not merely negative in character Release from suffering implies the first negation, which by itself results in a certain positive joy, thus implying the principle of double negation understood in western theology

The reference to being free from spiritual regret shows that yoga is always to be understood as having two sides one positive and the other negative this reference to the negative aspect being essential for without it the idea of yoga would not be complete

[24] *samkalpa prabhavan kamams*
tyaktva sarvan aseshatah
manasai ve 'ndriyagramam
viniyamya samantatah

Abandoning completely all desires originating in the will for particularized ends, curbing the collection of sense functionings on every side—

The subtler aspects of yogic discipline are detailed up to verse 29 When the ascent in yoga is gradually accomplished a symmetrical balance between counterparts of the same Self becomes established But before such a culmination is reached, there are subtle adjustments to be effected by the aspirant. These are referred to here

These indications follow on what was given in verse 12 To get rid thoroughly of all desires that are willed for particularized ends is the first step The curbing of the senses is to be done as the tortoise withdraws its head, tail and legs evenly into its shell, as stated in II, 58 The expression *gramam* (collection) applies to the clusters of afferent and efferent sense functions covered generally by the organs of perception and action as understood in Vedanta, and not merely to physiological organs

The phrase *samantatah* (on every side) includes top and bottom as well as the points of the compass, and should be understood as a special state of introversion belonging to yogic discipline

[25] *sanaih sanair uparamed*
buddhya dhritigrihitaya
atmasamstham manah kritva
na kimchid api chintayet

—slowly slowly, activities should be brought to a standstill by reason steadily applied, establishing the mind reflexively in the Self, without thinking of anything whatever

The withdrawal is to be effected cautiously and gently by applying a steady pressure in a direction dictated by reason. The mind being a part of general consciousness when it becomes reflexively lodged in the Self, it loses its distinction as a functional unit with the result that the consciousness becomes free from ideation This is the last of the indications to be followed before the perfectly poised yoga of the Self in the Self becomes established as stated in the verses below

[26] *yato yato mscharati*
manas chanchalam asthiram
tatas-tato niyamyai 'tad
atmany eva vasam nayet

Whatever causes the changeful, unsteady mind to go out (again and again), from each such, restraining (it again and again) it should ever be led to the side of the Self

There is no reference to specific psychological entities here, but to the mind generally The mind in this way represents one pole of general consciousness, before it is equated with the Self, as in verse 29 The mind being associative, it passes constantly from one set of associations to another, depending upon the interest of the man at each moment, and it is therefore qualified here by the epithets *chanchalam* (changeful, fickle) and *asthiram* (unsteady, shaky)

The expression *mscharati* (goes out) means the mind tends to dissipate itself among external objects of interest Whenever such a tendency asserts itself, it has to be checked or counteracted by an inverse effort till the whole mind has all its specifically outgoing functions gathered in The mind thus globalized is ready to be considered part of the Self-consciousness itself The practice of yoga consists of this merging of the mind through withdrawal, in the Self

Note the difference between this kind of withdrawal of mental factors into the more subjectively seated Self and the arresting of grosser or peripheral outgoing tendencies in v, 8 and 9

[27] *prasanta manasam hy enam*
yoginam sukham uttamam
upaiti santarajasam
brahmabhutam akalmasham

Such a yogi, verily, of calmed mind, of pacified passion, who has become the Absolute, and free from all dross, comes to supreme happiness

Following on the extreme happiness of the yogi of verse 21, further reference is found here and in verse 28 to this happiness This time, the nature of the yogi having been properly

defined, it is possible for the author to bring out the supreme or absolutist nature of the joy experienced, which is of no mean order limited to the domain of psychology

When outgoing tendencies are re-absorbed, a calmness prevails All such tendencies constituting the *rajasik* (passionate) nature here referred to have been more analytically referred to already as tendencies to action and attachment to objects Here they are treated under one generic term *rajas* (passion) It must be understood to include all strong or passionate urges to action or attachment to things and desires When this passionate tendency is conquered the main task of yoga is accomplished, as has once been hinted in III, 37, and all dross, such as sin, etc , which envelop wisdom, as stated in III, 38, is then transcended, as stated in V, 10

The expression *brahmabhuta* (one who has become the Absolute) suggests a merging of identity of the personality of the yogi with the Absolute The *sukham uttamam* (supreme joy) here is a joy in the Absolute It is more than an ordinary kind of joy, but of a contemplative order

[28] *yunjann evam sada 'tmanam*
yogi vigatakalmashah
sukhena brahmasamsparsam
atyantam sukham asnute

Ever uniting thus the Self, that yogi, rid of dross, having contact with the Absolute, enjoys easily happiness that is ultimate

With slight variation and further accentuation of certain ideas, this verse repeats almost the same theme as verse 27 We note that the *atmanam* (the Self) is stated to be in contact with instead of being merged in, the Absolute We view here the same verity from the psychological end instead of the cosmological but the result of the mere contact of the Self is something superlative as suggested by the word *atyantam* (ultimate) The joy could not be better In other words it has attained an absolutist character This transition from cosmology to psychology is accomplished in a graded fashion with a delicacy of its own

[29] *sarvabhutastham atmanam*
sarvabhutani cha 'tmani

ikshate yogayuktatma
sarvatra samadarsanah

One whose Self is united by yoga sees the Self as abiding in all beings and all beings as abiding in the Self, everywhere seeing the same

The Self is again given primacy and everything turns around the Self, as it were This verse conforms to the Upanishadic dictum where the Self is equated with all beings (*Isa Upanishad* 6)

A person established in yoga sees the same reality inside and outside Cosmology and psychology make no difference to him Both are equated in the Absolute Even other beings such as an animal or a holy man, fail to have any specific individuality in the unitive light of wisdom which prevails Subjectivity and objectivity cancel each other out The unitive outlook of yoga applies to every aspect of duality (1) as existing within the subject, (2) as existing within the object, and (3) as existing between subject and object

[30] *yo mam pasyati sarvatra*
sarvam cha mayi pasyati
tasya ham na pranasyami
sa cha me na pranasyati

He who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me to him I am not lost and he is not lost to Me

Yoga having been stated in terms of norms of pure consciousness, preceded by its theoretical definition, the subject now passes over here and in the next two verses to understanding yoga as applicable to an actual person living in a real and natural environment

Such a man is said to live 'according to the will of God", to use a conventional theological expression or he may represent in his way of life a type of spirituality, or he may live as one among other beings while carrying within himself a certain equality in terms of Self consciousness When both outward and inward factors are thus established in an equality proper to themselves, then the yogi can be said to be perfected Such is the trend of these three verses

The personal reference of Krishna to himself as representing the Absolute seems to water down the content of yoga so well stated in terms of Self consciousness, but it is inevitable here The Gita is intended to be more than subjective solipsism The discussion has to meet actualities, even the harsh crude actualities of a battlefield For literary reasons, if for no others, this personified Absolute is consistent and necessary

[31] *sarvabhutasthitam yo mam*
bhajaty ekatvam asthitah
sarvatha vartamano 'pi
sa yogi mayi vartate

That yogi who honours Me as abiding in all beings, established in unity, remaining as he may, in every (possible) way, he abides in Me

The expression *sarvatha vartamanah api* (remaining as he may in every possible way) is meant to indicate that this teaching does not demand from the yogi any particular pattern of behaviour known to the spiritual world He is free to conduct himself, behave or appear as he likes The one determinative here is that he remains affiliated to the Absolute

Ekatvam asthitah (established in unity) lifts the subject of yoga from a form of discipline to the level of philosophical and unitive understanding though not merely intellectual, because of the qualifying expression *sarvabhutasthitam* (as abiding in all beings) The philosopher must have established a living unity with all beings

[32] *atmaupamyena sarvatra*
samam pasyati yo rjuna
sukham va yadi va duhkham
sa yogi paramo matah

By establishing an analogy with the Self he who sees equality everywhere, O Arjuna whether (in) pleasant or painful (situations), he is considered a perfect yogi

The notion of equality between men as extended beyond human life to all beings is the basis of *ahimsa* (non injury) and is derived from the unity of the Self as understood in

verse 29 All are brothers in the Self and unitive understanding can include the whole of existence There is also a unitive equality which refers to oneself, which is a balanced neutrality between happiness and sorrow

In the yogi we have to understand two sets of adjustments, first his unitive adjustment with all beings, and secondly those with the great variety of situations alternating between happiness and sorrow The former is "horizontal" and the latter "vertical" Where both refer to the same yogi, he can be described as *parama* (highest)

Arjuna uvacha

[33] *yo 'yam yogas tvaya proktah*
sāmyena madhusudana
etasya 'ham na pasyami
chanchalatvat sthitim sthirām

Arjuna said
That yoga you have outlined as consisting of sameness, O Madhusudana (Krishna), I do not see for this any stable foundation, owing to changefulness

The literary device of a *samvāda* (dialogue) is resorted to again in order to broach a new aspect of the subject of yoga Yoga has been described as also having, in its earlier stages, the character of a discipline depending upon the practice of withdrawal, restraint, etc Details regarding seat and posture might lead one to think that yoga also, like Vedic ritualism, comprises injunctions and obligations of a binding nature Arjuna suggests here and in the next verse, quite pertinently, that the mind is restless and hard to control It is therefore likely, as he points out in verses 37 and 38, that a man who has continued on the path of yoga might fail and be worse off In his answer Krishna makes it clear that the way of yoga must be looked upon as open where backward sliding is no danger The difference is the same as that implied in ii, 40

Here, in verse 33, the expression *samyena* (as consisting of sameness) is important because it exactly indicates that central distinguishing character of yoga as it has been taught in the Gita. The same feature of yoga was once stated in ii, 48 Although other definitions of yoga are given, this characteristic

of sameness, and of balancing, cancelling out or equating counterparts, may be said to be the Gita's special contribution to the subject.

But this character of sameness, as understood by Arjuna, is incompatible with the shifting nature of consciousness, at least at the level of the mind. Associations based on momentary interests, as it has been said in II, 67, carry away the understanding, leaving no permanent basis upon which this sameness can be established.

[34] *chanchalam hi manah krishna*
pramāthi balavad dridham
tasyā 'ham nigraham manye
vāyor iva sudushkaram

The mind is changeful indeed, O Krishna; it is agitated, forceful and imperative (in character); like *the wind, I consider its control difficult.*

Arjuna is evidently thinking of peripheral aspects of consciousness where control is difficult, as implied in the analogy of the ship in the gale in II, 67.

The expression *vāyor iva* (like the wind) is very apt, inasmuch as the wind has nothing centralized about it. Yoga being a form of restraint of outgoing tendencies, it consists of centralization. Arjuna's question is therefore most pertinent since it concerns this peripheral difficulty.

The three qualifications applied to the mind indicate how strong this centrifugal tendency can be. Once caught in it, there is a certain helplessness.

Sribhagavān uvācha

[35] *asamsayam mahābāho*
mano durnigraham chalam
abhyāsena tu kaunteya
vairāgyena cha grihyate

Krishna said:
Doubtless, O Mighty-Armed (Arjuna), the mind is difficult to control and changeful. By practice, indeed, O Son of Kunti (Arjuna), and by dispassion (it) is held (together).

Krishna has no other alternative than to agree with Arjuna and as a remedy appeals to practice and dispassionateness

We can easily understand the need for *vairagya* (dispassion) for bringing the mind under control, but the *abhyasa* (practice) here is more problematic Arjuna has already indicated that sameness characterizes all the features of practice, whether in earlier or later phases, of yoga There is a great deal of difference between this and the discipline of Patanjali Leaving aside those references to postures etc, indicated in verse 10, there are only indications in verses 25 and 26 of this Chapter which could be said to come under the meaning of practice The usual notion that practice in yoga implies breathing and other hard exercises is altogether discountenanced in the Gita Hence the *abhyasa* (practice) meant here is the bringing together of two aspects of the Self into unity, and when *vairagya* (dispassion) has already been accomplished, the results of yoga accrue easily, as mentioned in verse 28

Grihyate (is held together) indicates that yoga is a gathering or holding together of tendencies which, left to nature, disperse themselves

[36] *asamyatatmana yogo*
dushprapa iti me matih
vasyatmana tu yatata
sakyo vaptum upayatah

By a Self uncontrolled, yoga is hard to attain, such is my opinion but by a Self which is its own support, endeavouring it is possible to reach through the means (indicated)

The nature of the practice or endeavour in yoga is further elaborated in more general terms here, following on the lines of verses 5 and 6 Self control is not a moral discipline, stoically applied to himself by a man in any social sense It is unitive understanding which effects Self control Neither is discipline here of the nature of any severe austerity It is more of the nature of philosophical understanding and yoga is also associated with joy at every stage of its progress

In spite of all this, however, it involves the avoidance of conflict between aspects of the Self A man who has such a conflict is called *asamyatatma* (one whose Self is not controlled), and the opposite case of being without conflict is called

vasyatmā (one whose Self is on his own side) Verse 6 of this Chapter gives the distinction between these two very clearly

The phrase *yatata* (by endeavouring) implies an effort, the nature of which should be understood as a contemplative ascent rather than any outward practice The phrase *upayatah* (through means) must refer to the means already suggested in verses 25 and 26 Carefully examined, these means do not conform to any rigid practices as understood in schools of yoga such as *hatha* yoga, *raja* yoga, etc

Arjuna uvacha

[37] *ayatih sraddhayo 'peto*
yogach chalitamanasah
aprapya yogasamsiddhim
kam gatim krishna gachchhati

[38] *kachchin no 'bhayavibhrashtas*
chhinnabhram iva nasyati
apratishtho mahabaho
vimudho brahmanah pathi

Arjuna said
(For) he whose mind, unsubdued (but) endowed with faith, has deviated from yoga, not reaching to yogic attainments, what path does he take, O Krishna?

Is he not fallen from both like a riven cloud destroyed without a mainstay, O Mighty Armed (Krishna), confounded regarding the path of the Absolute?

Arjuna's question recalls to us that he is a *purva pakshin* (anterior critic) and that this is a *samvada* (dialogue) on wisdom We must remember the points mentioned in the comment on the last verse, in trying to understand the diagnosis of a person described here as *yogach chalitamanasah* (one whose mind has deviated from yoga) and as *yogabhrashtah* (one exiled to yoga) of verse 41 (to follow)

The nature of the calamity should be clear if we are to understand properly the hope and the remedy to be stated later Further indications of the case are found in the expressions *ubhayavibhrashtah* (one fallen from both) and the most

graphic analogy of the riven cloud The two factors implied by the word "both" are not explicitly stated Sankara suggests they refer to *jnana* (knowledge) and *karma* (ritualist work), but the meaning of "both" should be inferred from the various and ambivalent references to the Self in the previous Chapters Whatever the two factors may be, when they are brought together unitively, they are conducive to yoga, and when they are in conflict yoga is destroyed

The expressions *ayatih* (unsubdued) and *sraddhayo 'petah* (endowed with faith) in verse 37, seem to face opposite ways We have to gather that the person in question is of good intentions but has merely temporarily deflected from the path of yoga The very fact of deflection implies that he cannot reach the legitimate end According to the usual Vedic or even religious belief, a sinner or a fallen man loses paradise The merit gained in religions is still relativist and its benefits are within the relative world In the Gita, however, the nature of emancipation follows other lines

[39] *etan me samsayam krishna*
chhettum arhasy aseshatah
t adanyah samsayasya 'sya
chhetta na hy upapadyate

My doubt, O Krishna, you should dispel completely. Other than you there is none to be found to dispel this doubt

First of all Arjuna here does not want a tentative, but a final answer, secondly he says nobody but Krishna can give such an answer By these remarks he indicates that he is not himself a relativist, but one prepared to go the whole way to the utmost possible limits of absolutism The whole verse is intended to underline the absolutist quality of the answer to be given

Sribhagavan uvacha

[40] *partha nai 'ie ha na mutra*
vinasas tasya vidyate
na hi kalyanakrit kaschid
durgatim tata gachchhati

Krishna said.
O Partha (Arjuna), neither here nor hereafter is there destruction for him, for none of good deeds, O Son, ever goes to perdition.

The answer is of a sweeping nature. Life here and hereafter have been touched upon and an eternal life affirmed, especially for a man described here as *kalyānakrit* (one who does good). This, it must be admitted, is vague and general. As meant here, a man who does good must be one motivated by superior human values tending towards the highest good Such values can include some that belong to everyday life here.

Such an answer, with the implied guarantee, has only one justification or saving feature, as indicated in verse 37, in the expression *sraddhayo 'peto* (endowed with faith). This faith must necessarily refer either directly or indirectly to the Absolute.

There is an extreme intimacy and tenderness in the confident way in which this truth is stated The verity herein does not call for proof, being based on *a priori* considerations. Hence the intimate *rapport* between guru and sishya, reflected in the opening expression Pārtha (Arjuna) and the terminating *tata* (son).

The term *durgatih* (perdition) arises out of the eschatological allusion to *gatih* (way, course, destiny) of Arjuna's question in verse 37.

[41] *prapya punyakritam lokān*
ushitva sāsvatih samāh
suchinām srimatam gehe
yogabhrashto 'bhijāyate

Having attained to the worlds of the righteous and having dwelt there for eternal years, he who deviated from the path of yoga is reborn in a house of the pure and well to-do

To some extent this verse anticipates the contents of IX, 20 and 21, but there it is a relativist picture which is presented regarding the destiny of the soul Here, the expression *sāsvatih samāh* (everlasting years) is intriguing It is almost equal to "eternal life" and if such an individual has gone to eternal

life, strictly speaking, no question of rebirth should arise But we should remember that Arjuna wants an answer in keeping with his own notions of spirituality

The *karma* yogi is implied and the highest world that *karma* yoga (unitive action) can ever bring is the *punyakritam lokah* (worlds of the righteous) referred to here In keeping with the ritualist context no higher destiny could be referred to, and this manner of saying marks the highest possible absolutism Arjuna himself insists on a finalized answer and therefore the answer is given in this form to suit him

The expression *srimatam gehe* (in the house of the well to do) strikes the reader as a rather mundane reference, but this is to be set off against the ' worlds of the righteous With Vedic ritualists the usual practice is to refer to happiness in heaven alone There is no reference to happiness here and, what is more, there is as we see here, equal reference to a decent life on earth The righteous man is better here as well as hereafter, not in terms of pleasure, but in what concerns his spiritual life more directly, such as cleanliness and the possibility of leisure in a well to-do family Vestiges of relativism still remain in this rather simplified picture even here, but the answer makes an effort to meet the question as squarely as possible for, strictly speaking, Vedanta has no eschatology

[42] *athava yoginam eva*
kule bhavati dhimatam
etad dhi durlabhataram
loke janma yad idrisam

Else he is born in a family of wise yogis only A birth like this is very rare to obtain in this world

A superior alternative is suggested to the rather simple but eschatological picture of rebirth implied in the last verse Here the reference to other worlds is avoided and the whole advantage for the yogi is reduced to terms of here and now To be born among a group of wise yogis is definitely an advantage on the path of wisdom, because environment does count The word *kula* (family) does not necessarily mean a natural family It can mean the family of a guru or *guru kula* (teacher-family) It was usual in Upanishadic times for a guru to live

with his own family, receiving other students of wisdom therein Such a coincidence or luck is pointed out to be *durlabhataram* (very rare) and therefore more valuable than the case already described Though rare to others who are not yogis, the suggestion is that it is within the reach of the yogi who has failed

[43] *tatra tam buddhisamyogam*
labhate paurvadehikam
yatate cha tato bhuyah
samsiddhau kurunandana

There he obtains that union with reason, pertaining to a previous body, (and) strives thence again for perfection, O Prize of the Kurus (Arjuna)

There was a point at which the yogi deviated from his path Before such a point of time, he enjoyed what is described here as *buddhisamyogam* (union with reason) When the fallen yogi is reborn, especially among wise yogis, there is a kind of healing process which takes place, comparable to regeneration in some plants and animals Those natural and legitimate tendencies enforced by habits in earlier life or lives, tend to exert their own pressure, helping the fallen yogi to catch up with what was once temporarily lost He is thus set going normally once again on the path of progress leading to *samsiddhi* (final attainment)

The word *yatete* (he strives) shows that a certain effort is still necessary for the yogi in this case

[44] *purvabhyasena tenai 'va*
hriyate hy avaso 'pi sah
jijnasur api yogasya
sabdabrahma 'tivartate

By the former practice itself he is drawn on though disabled, as one merely desiring to know of yoga, he transcends the Absolute of sound (*sabdabrahma*)

Here a hopeful picture of progress in the spiritual path is indicated The person we have to imagine here is listless or inert, as indicated by the expression *avasah* (one disabled and intransigent)

However, despite this condition of spirit, the previous tendencies have the subtle power of drawing him towards a very high order of emancipation The word *hriyate* (is drawn) does not say which way or between what the attraction is This has given rise to some misunderstandings and has suggested alternative readings, some preferring *kriyate* (is made), but this does not make the sense any clearer We must explain the attraction as tending towards an absolute value, because it is clear from the context that he is being saved and not lost, in fact the emancipation reached by him is even better than that which the most learned of Vedic Brahmins could expect, as made clear by the last line of this verse

The *sabdabrahma* (sound Absolute) as agreed by all commentators except Ramanuja (who equates it with *prakriti*, nature), is that lower aspect of the Absolute covered by or implicit in the *Vedas* taken as a whole There is an Absolute beyond word and sound which is the Absolute proper To reach this crossing over the former all that is here demanded from the fallen yogi is to be a *jijnasuh* (one desiring to know) in the context of yoga In other words, it is wisdom that *matters*

[45] *prayatnad yatamanas*
yogi samsuddha kilbishah
anekajanma samsiddhas
tato yati param gatim

But the yogi who strives with perseverance, purified from evils, and perfected by many births, then *reaches the supreme path*

This verse can refer to another yogi contrasted with the one mentioned in the last verse or it could even refer to the same yogi in respect of aspects of spiritual life which go beyond yoga into final emancipation

The reference to evil and the general teleological approach justifies the treatment of the same subject in another way But even making due allowance for all these considerations, *there is to be noted* a distinct contrast between the quick emancipation mentioned in verse 44 and the plodding progress towards emancipation here The contrast perhaps refers to the two types of emancipation known in Vedanta *krama mukti* (gradual liberation) and *sadyah mukti* (immediate

liberation), and therefore justifies this verse We have to infer two distinct kinds of yogic contemplation—one ascending and one descending, as implied in VI, 3 The present verse refers to that kind in which an effort is implied

The reference to many births further emphasizes the slow progress towards perfection, but it is to be noted that it is not mere perfection in yoga, but to *para gatih* (the highest path)

[46] *tapasvibhyo dhiko yogi*
jnanibhyo pi mato dhikah
karmibhyas cha dhiko yogi
tasmad yogi bhava rjuna

> The yogi is greater than men of austerity, and he is thought to be greater than men of wisdom, and greater than men of works, therefore become a yogi, O Arjuna

This penultimate verse is meant to extol the yogi Mere *tapas* (austerity) as it is known in the field of Indian spirituality is a severe form of joyless self discipline The *jnani* is a wise man who might at best belong to the Samkhya (rationalist) or Nyaya (logical) philosophical schools whose life is based on reasoning which generally ends up with sophistications and academic discussions by themselves dry as dust Likewise the ritualist tends to become ego-centred and harshly exclusive Yoga generally understood is both a way of thinking and a way of life The yogi is a dialectician who harmonizes old in terms of new and *vice versa* and is capable of giving fresh life to arguments that otherwise would be dead or stale The breeze of a fresh life enlivens the ways of a yogi How the yogic touch makes for such a difference has been indicated in the preceding Chapters

Each of the types of spirituality referred to here when they are taken according to a yogic method or theory of knowledge, become as it were transmuted This verse states the superiority of such a yogic way in both practical and theoretical matters.

The expression *mato dhikah* (thought to be greater) is applied only to men of wisdom either because of some deference to the wise men on the part of the author or because wisdom is really great when it is the proper kind The wisdom proper to the yogi it is suggested here is higher than wisdom ordinarily understood

[47] *yoginam api sarvesham*
madgatena ntaratmana
sraddhavan bhajate yo mam
sa me yuktatamo matah

Of all yogis, he who with inner Self is merged in Me, full of faith, devoted to Me, is considered by Me the most unitive (*yuktatamah*)

Yoga, although it implies the dialectical method, is best when the highest values are envisaged in the method When personal values are left out, the superiority of even the yogic method becomes to that extent compromised or watered down So even in the domain of yoga, where different grades are possible, this verse refers to one who has established whole-hearted and complete bipolarity with the Absolute represented here by Krishna That Absolute could be both personal and impersonal, but the personification should not be taken as theistic or in a childishly anthropomorphic sense, because it is the literary device which makes this personal pronoun 'Me necessary

Three qualifications of a yogi are underlined here his inner Self must have merged or identified itself with the Absolute, he must be full of faith, and he must be a *bhakta* (a devotee) —not in a sentimentally circumscribed sense as usually understood, but in the larger sense, as we have pointed out under verse 15

It should also be noted that hitherto the comparative degree was used with reference to the superiority of the yogi, not only in verse 46 but in verse 42 Here the superlative is purposely reserved to stress the case of a yogi who conforms to the yoga of the Gita, which is a revalued statement of all extant spirituality of the time

In summing up therefore we find that this Chapter does not deal with yoga as a subject, as many have supposed, but with the person of the yogi himself and the yogi too is considered, not as one whose life is full of harsh austerities and suffering, but as one who is joyous, hopeful and free from conflicts The possibility of a yogi being affiliated to the wisdom of the Absolute is indicated in this closing verse

With this Chapter, all preliminary discussions regarding the teaching of the Gita its method how it is to be treated as a yoga, and how the yogi as a person is to approach wisdom,

have been covered, thus preparing the ground for a real theoretical discussion of wisdom itself, in the next Chapter

iti srimad bhagavadgitasupanishatsu brahmavidyayam
yogasastre srikrishnarjunasamvade
dhyanayogo nama shashtho 'dhyayah

Thus ends in the Upanishads of the Songs of God, in the Science of the Wisdom of the Absolute, in the Dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, the Sixth Chapter entitled Unitive Contemplation.

CHAPTER VII

THE UNITIVE WAY OF WISDOM SYNTHESIS

Jnana Vijnana Yoga

This Chapter has variously been called *Jnana Yoga* (Yoga of Pure Wisdom) *Vijnana Yoga* (Yoga of Applied Wisdom) and *Jnana Vijnana Yoga* (Yoga of Pure and Applied Wisdom) A similar sounding title was given to Chapter IV There the perennial nature of wisdom as distinct from a mere system of rational philosophy covered by Samkhya in Chapter II was made evident Chapter V gave further primacy to the way of wisdom, while Chapter VI brought the discussion to a personalized focal point in the name of a universalist yogi The best of all yogis it concluded, was one who had established a bipolar relation with the Absolute

The present Chapter continues from this point, not in terms of personal relationship, but in an understanding of the absolute nature of reality not in the language of pure philosophy, but as given to intuition or by the contemplative method of synthesis by bringing counterparts under one vision

Contemplation can result only from the extreme identity of subject and object by which through intuition, one penetrates into the synthetic object subject Reality is then revealed in its own light

A superficial scansion of the verses reveals that the enumeration of items under reality discussed here includes earth, water, fire, air and space Modern philosophy does not usually include such entities within its scope Pre Socratic hylozoism, the notion that all matter is alive has been discredited in the western world as being too ancient or anti Christian In India too, the Samkhya enumeration of the *tattvas* (principles or categories of reality or nature) which includes the *tanmatras* (essences of sense values) has been largely transcended in the Vedanta The duality as between *prakriti* (nature) and *purusha* (spirit) is repugnant to Vedanta

Yet here we find reference to a higher and a lower nature of the Absolute, and to the sapidity of water as representing the Absolute Evidently the attempt is to include existential and subsistential aspects of reality together in one sweeping synthetic survey of reality as a whole

These two aspects of nature (referred to in verses 4 and 5) can be brought together unitively as a counterpart to the yogi or contemplative only through the device of a personification of the Absolute There is the yogi on the one side and the *yogesvara* (Lord of Yoga) on the other side, who represents the highest personal value or good to be attained In knowing the Absolute good all else that matters in wisdom is comprised It is in this sense that this Chapter may be said to deal with wisdom that leaves nothing more left to be known," as said in verse 2 The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, II, IV, 5 contains a similar statement about the all comprehensive nature of Absolute wisdom

For reasons we have explained, such wisdom presupposes an intimate bipolar relation between the yogi and the Absolute, as recommended in the last verse of the previous Chapter and repeated in the very first word (*mayi*, in Me) of this present Chapter This bipolar relationship characterizes this Chapter The kind of synthetic wisdom which results from such a relationship refers to immanent and transcendental, subjective and objective, pure and practical, aspects of reality at the same time

In the middle of the Chapter a scale of values from everyday ones to the highest is given where again subjective and objective items are included indifferently The scope of this Chapter is further indicated by the reference to the condition of the spirit of a man who is about to die All departmentalized spirituality tends to be canalized into one master sentiment at such a time Spirituality thus becomes wholehearted and global and personal again, covering the whole subject-object of wisdom and all items of value to human life

Sribhagavan uvacha

[1] *mayy asaktamanah partha*
yogam yunjan madasrayah
asamsayam samagram mam
yatha jnasyasi tach chhrinu

Krishna said.
Having a mind attached to Me, O Pārtha (Arjuna), and joining unitively through yoga, and having Me as refuge, how you will know Me without any doubt, comprehensively, that do hear.

The expression joining this Chapter with the last is the very first phrase *mayy-āsaktamanah* (one whose mind is attached to Me). In the last verse of the previous Chapter it was more than mind which was affiliated There it was the whole Self. Here only the minimum requirement for the purposes of this Chapter is insisted upon, as a necessary condition for knowing Absolute reality as *samagram* (whole). The necessity for wholesale understanding is more emphatically stressed in the next verse

The science of the Absolute has always been described in the Upanishads as "knowing which, everything else becomes known". Thus the subject of this Chapter becomes indirectly indicated as the same *brahmavidyā* (science of the Absolute) as spoken of in the *Brahma-Sutras* I, iii, 6

The bipolar nature of the affiliation being qualified by (1) *yogam yunjan* (joining unitively through yoga) which means that the subject and object here enter constantly into a relationship belonging to the method of yoga, and (2) by the phrase *madāsrayah (one whose refuge is Myself), that is in* Krishna as a representative of the Absolute, this affiliation becomes unmistakable

It is *brahmavidyā* (the science of the Absolute) which is going to be covered in this short Chapter What may seem the peculiarities of the approach are already indicated in this opening verse.

[2] *jnanam te 'ham savijnānam*
idam vakshyamy aseshatah
yaj jnatvā ne 'ha bhuyo 'nyaj
jnatavyam avasishyate

I shall teach you this (pure) wisdom together with this (applied) knowledge, without any omission, knowing which, there will be nothing more here left over that should be known

The whole of this verse is meant to underline the meaning of *samagram* (whole) of verse 1. The term *aseshatah* (without remainder) means there is no possibility of any remainder when *brahman* (the Absolute) has been understood as explained in this Chapter. The second line only makes this more explicit for purposes of emphasis, that the science of the Absolute is not to be considered a department or branch of any knowledge. It is complete in itself, and belongs to its own unique category.

What is more, it comprises two broad divisions which are here named *jnāna* (pure wisdom) and *vijnāna* (specialized knowledge). If wisdom refers to theory, specialized knowledge refers to practice. If the former is pure, the other is applied.[1] If one is philosophy, the other is a way of life.

Although indicating a way of life, the Gita should not be considered either a *smriti* (indirectly remembered scripture) or a *dharma sāstra* (treatise on obligatory duties). It stops short of being mandatory and even of being permissive. A way of life is merely indicated as optional for the disciple to choose, because such a way of life agrees with and forms a natural counterpart to the way of wisdom. If diet and caste rules are referred to in certain Chapters of the Gita, they are conceived in an advisory spirit, and only in so far as they directly rise out of the theory. Wisdom by itself would be incomplete without this natural counterpart which implies a *savoir faire* or a knowledge of what to do in every situation.

The *vijnāna* (applied knowledge) here has to be understood in this light only, and though the Gita in later Chapters deals with subjects such as dietetics and sociology, in this Chapter the applied knowledge comprises merely existential aspects of reality, where laws of nature operate, and referred to as the lower nature of the Absolute in verse 4.

Jnāna (pure wisdom) and *vijnāna* (applied knowledge) taken together would cover all the aspects of the Absolute, because whatever other department might be thought of as belonging to the science of the Absolute could be legitimately included under one or the other. The science of the Absolute deals with ultimate personal value. It has therefore to be treated

[1] The *Amarakosa*, a famous Samskrit lexicon, considered to be the earliest thesaurus, has the definition *mokshe dhih jnanam anyatra vijnānam silpasāstrayoh* (quoted but not translated, by Radhakrishnan in his *Bhagavadgita*, p. 149) meaning, "Consciousness applied to liberation is called *jnāna* and when otherwise, as in the science of architecture, it is called *vijnāna*."

globally and should never be treated piecemeal in sectional fashion, as might be permissible in other branches of knowledge such as mechanics, dynamics, etc

[3] *manushyanam sahasreshu*
kaschid yatati siddhaye
yatatam api siddhanam
kaschin mam vetti tattvatah

Among thousands of men, one perchance strives for perfection Even among the striving who have attained, one perchance knows Me according to proper principles

Here the author complains that very few get to the bottom of this unique and thorough wisdom People are interested in wisdom in many different ways Some approach it through religion, some through good works, and even among these there are degrees and varieties

Apart from such a complaint, this verse draws attention to the great variety of ways existing among seekers The expression *tattvatah* (according to principles) means according to the full philosophical import of the Absolute, and this Chapter being intended for the examination of the philosophical implications of yoga, the aptness of this statement cannot be questioned, especially as we find later, in verse 16, that these several varieties are enumerated The same complaint of a lack of understanding, and that people do often miss the proper approach to wisdom is further referred to in verse 24 In IV, 10 it was once stated that many have come to the Absolute, and in IV, 11 also that all may be said to walk the path of the Absolute The rarity here must therefore refer to a philosophical understanding of the Absolute

The word *vetti* (understands) refers to a perfection through wisdom rather than through the *siddhis* (psychic attainments) commonly associated with yoga

[4] *bhumir apo nalo vayuh*
kham mano buddhir eva cha
ahamkara iti yam me
bhinna prakritir ashtadha

Earth, water, fire, air, sky, mind, reason also, and consciousness of individuality, thus here is divided My eightfold nature.

The enumeration given here is not in the usual strict order of the twenty-five categories or principles (*tattvas*) of the Sāmkhya philosophy. Sāmkhya places the *tanmātras* (subtle principles of sound, etc.), prior to the *mahābhūtas* (gross elemental conditions of nature). The Gita here avoids unnecessary theorization, along Sāmkhya lines, and begins in inverse order with the grossest of the *mahābhūtas* (gross elements) the earth, leading upwards as it were to mind, reason and individuality-consciousness (*ahamkāra*).

We find also in verses 8 and 9 that these actual gross aspects of nature are not viewed as matter but as values to which human beings are related and which enter consciousness more directly. Thus the unitive nature of the Absolute is established. But in this preliminary enumeration, the Gita wishes to err if at all, on the side of actuality, rather than on the side of far-fetched theory.

By the inclusion of the ego-consciousness in this series of the lower nature of the Absolute, some factors of consciousness which properly belong to the intelligent *purusha* (self or spirit) of orthodox Sāmkhya are covered. On the other hand, the gross earth, when it is referred to as "pure fragrance" in verse 9, again attains a new and revised status.

Ascending and descending dialectics move, as it were, simultaneously in inverse directions, so as to transmute these divided and separate entities into pearls of value strung on the thread of the Absolute, and with the Absolute as the final source-value as stated in verse 7.

The reference to *me bhinnā prakriti* (my distinct divided nature) further shows that the duality between *prakriti* (nature) and *purusha* (spirit) which is such a marked feature of Sāmkhya, is not given recognition. Instead, each item mentioned gains a distinct status. The Absolute pervades nature which itself is an aspect of the Absolute. In verse 12 a reciprocal relation is indicated.

[5] *apare 'yam itas tv anyām*
prakritim viddhi me param
jivabhūtām mahābāho
yaye 'dam dhāryate jagat

This is the non transcendental (*apara*=immanent) Know the other to be my nature, which is transcendental, constituting life, O Mighty-Armed (Arjuna), by which the phenomenal world is sustained

Two aspects of the Absolute are referred to here by the terms *apara* (immanent) and *para* (transcendent) These dual aspects are examined in this Chapter under the heading of the nature of the Absolute treated unitively and taken as one whole The life-principle running through the two aspects is referred to here as *jivabhuta* (life element) the common unitive factor linking up both

This counterpart duality is not the same as the more mechanistic duality of the Samkhya Before abolishing the duality completely, the Gita has to accept a modified Samkhya frame of reference, and seemingly adopt its method But we find as we proceed towards the more central Chapters of the Gita which deal with the deeper seats of consciousness, that the asymmetry attached to the duality at this initial stage tends to be rounded off In Chapter XIII the duality emerges again, to become more pronounced, till almost the very end of the Gita, where different religious practices have to be compared and criticized, with questions of diet and vocational differences to be revalued

In XVIII, 61, the Absolute is treated as a kind of *deus ex machina*, and in XVI, 19, like an angry Jehovah These references being graded according to the structural method of the Gita are justified in their own proper context The reader has to see the delicate shades of such distinctions

To treat of matter and mind as two distinct entities is against the spirit of Vedanta, and consequently of the Gita Instead of graded distinctions between matter and mind, Vedanta speaks of concentric inner and outer zones or *koshas* (sheaths shells), which refer to the spiritual aspects of the personality of man Cosmology itself is included side by side with subjective factors such as wisdom and knowledge Some asymmetry is bound to persist when cosmology and psychology are treated together as here, however One can ascend from cosmology to psychology or descend downwards from consciousness to the tangible realities of life

In this particular verse, the author has chosen the ascending method The reverse method, of descent, may be noted in XV, 7. A more neutral position, is implied in X, 42

a masculine principle. The difference belongs to the particular contexts, to be understood imaginatively and not too literally.

As stated expressly here, the Absolute is both the origin and the final terminus of regression for the phenomenal world The reference to a superior *yoni* (womb) or source above, which is the source of phenomenal nature here below, would suggest that the Absolute is a hypostatic entity But this asymmetry is soon corrected here and elsewhere in the Gita. For example, in the verse cited earlier, xiv, 3, the *mahad brahma* (Great Brahma) is more suggestive of a hierophantic presence.

The application to the same Absolute of the two qualifications, *prabhavah* (becoming) and *pralayah* (dissolution) tends to cancel out such hypostatic and hierophantic fixations into a central notion of a neutral Absolute

[7] *mattah parataram na 'nyat*
kimchid asti dhanamjaya
mayi sarvam idam protam
sutre manigana iva

Nothing else is higher than Me, O Winner of Wealth (Arjuna) In Me all this is strung as a classified series (*ganah*) of precious beads on a string

How the Absolute is related to the visible or invisible entities filling the consciousness of mankind, whether in the Platonic world of the Intelligibles or in the world of actualities, is attempted to be brought out here by an analogy whose import is vague This has given rise to alternative speculations on the part of commentators such as Sankara who think it better to change the analogy to the weaving of cloth instead of thinking of beads

This relation between the Absolute and the manifested is understood by such commentators as causal, the Absolute being traced backwards and identified with a first cause

But this analogy of beads on a string is deeper than mere philosophical speculation To understand the Absolute merely as a first cause does not reveal its character in that wholesale manner mentioned in verses 1 and 2

If we are ever to understand what is in the mind of the author we must therefore go back to similar analogies lying buried in the Upanishads From the list of items dealt with in the verses that immediately follow, it is clear that each

bead corresponds to a system or cluster of realities which adhere together to form a compact unit in a world of its own. These units may touch the actual, or enter into consciousness through concepts or percepts, or may even rise to the purer world of the Intelligibles

Whatever level they may belong to, earthy, human or celestial, when they are regarded as representing closed groups of human values, the bead analogy becomes understandable There is a relation uniting all beads and running through them, and each bead, at whatever level it may be considered, has its value depending upon this relationship

We can imagine an ascending scale of values ranging from the most actual to the most theoretical or sublime, at the highest point of which the Absolute itself may be considered as a brilliant pearl of great price This presiding value is what gives coherence and correlation to all the other values at the different levels of human consciousness

This concept is justified by the expression *mattah parataram na 'nyat* (nothing whatever is higher than Me) The Absolute is thus understood as a supreme value At the same time it should be understood as a correlational principle or as a norm which sets the standard for all other values whatsoever

In the *Mundaka Upanishad* (II, II 5) instead of a string, there is the analogy of a bridge which spans the gulf between the here and the beyond for men to cross over to and fro

> He on whom the sky, the earth, and the atmosphere
> Are woven, and the mind, together with all the vital energies,
> Him alone know as the one *atman* (Self) Other words dismiss
> He is the bridge to immortality

Again in the *Prasna Upanishad* (IV, IV 7 9) all the components of *prakriti* (nature) are likened to birds resorting to the tree of the supreme Self

In *Genesis* XXVIII, 10 there is a similar analogy where angels go up and down Jacob's ladder

The scale of values must have been implied in these antique analogies handed down from very remote times Some of the verses that follow here become clearer when considered in terms of such a string of graded values, more than when

thought of in terms of belonging either to philosophical realism or idealism

It must be imagined that the *maniganah* (classified series of precious beads) belong to different grades, whether taken individually or in groups consisting of small numbers as the term *gana* admits of, meaning series as well as classes

[8] *raso 'ham apsu kaunteya*
prabha 'smi sasisuryayoh
pranavah sarvavedeshu
sabdah khe paurusham nrishu

I am the taste in waters, O Son of Kunti (Arjuna), I am the light in the moon and the sun, I am *Aum* (numinous exclamation) in all the Vedas, sound in the sky and the human quality in men

The way of entering into the unitive principle implied in the various entities enumerated is indicated in this verse It involves intuition and a certain pressure of contemplation

The very first example is taken from the elements and the Samkhya order would seem to be purposely violated, because the value factor emerging out of any one item is meant to have an equal status with any other The taste of water depends upon a subtle relationship established between water as an object and the person feeling the taste It is a relation whose reality depends upon the Absolute reality implied in it

The second example of *prabha* (brightness) being akin to fire, has a value which similarly has its being in the Absolute The reference to moon and sun together is to give unitive treatment to the luminaries without regard to magnitude

The next example goes beyond the senses to the consciousness or the mind The Vedas mean much to people attached to them and they might get lost in all its ramifications But the spoken word *Aum* as representing the *sabda brahman* (the Word Absolute) may be said to be the core of the Vedas and, in what concerns contemplation their quintessence When the Vedic adherent establishes a relationship with this word, he appreciates in himself a certain human value which refers to the same constant depending on the Absolute The feeling content may be called the sense of the holy the awful the wonderful or the numinous But nevertheless it is not different from the Absolute implied in it

The Vedas are all represented by the word *Aum* which, in its unuttered or higher aspect, can include the Vedanta also, if the Absolute here is to be understood as all comprehensive

The fourth example, sound, represents an important value factor As music can please, so also sounds representing con cepts or ideas can exalt the individual and serve as a kind of necessary nourishment in human life, thus relating sound in general to the Absolute

The last example here is the human quality in man, which distinguishes the individual This is the unique quality which touches his essential nature When a man expresses fully his own manhood, he may be said to be truly himself, and thus a representative of the Absolute Here the counterparts can be the simple animal basis of individual life on the one hand, and what distinguishes man as the human species on the other hand

The employment of the plural in the various examples is to accentuate the variety of manifestation as against the unity of the Absolute principle It is a relation unitively conceived between the many and the One

[9] *punyo gandhah prithivyam cha*
tejas cha smi vibhavasau
jivanam sarvabhuteshu
tapas cha 'smi tapasvishu

I am the holy fragrance of the earth (divinity) and also the brilliance of the luminary (presence), the vital principle in all beings, and the (essence of) austerity in all ascetics

A new set of examples has been chosen apparently for variety s sake Here too there are hierophantic and hypostatic principles under reference The odour of the earth is called *punyah* (holy or pure)—a term which can apply to all the items here—and it is further called *gandhah* (smell or perfume) intended here to mean something agreeable rather than noxious This is in keeping with the definition In the *tarka sastra* (textbook on Nyaya logic) as well as in Samkhya, it is known that the distinguishing feature of the earth philosophically, apart from actuality, is its odour

Throughout the world people who are related to nature, whether called civilized or primitive, have considered the

good earth as holy The Greek goddess Gaea and the Roman goddess Tellus are personifications of the earth principle Among other similar peoples the idea of holiness applied to the earth is universally common The "holy fragrance" is therefore understandable The word *prithivi* (the wide, the earth as a female deity) implies personification of the earth and is not mere objectivity

The term *vibhavasu* (luminary) is not a specific or actual object only It is also a presence, a hierophancy, and can connote fire, moon and sun The object of the author is to refer here to the holy presences suggested in all bright objects, including fire The light itself is referred to as *tejas* (brilliance) which is related to that aspect of consciousness called *taijasa* (the brilliant) which is at the basis of dreams

Similarly, all beings have at their core *jivanam* (the life element) or the *elan vital* or vital urge

The reference to *tapas* (the 'burning' of spiritual discipline, asceticism) which is a human quality or a personal attitude, is intended to be included as one instance at least of the items mentioned in verse 4 The self discipline here concerns the ego, mind and reason which are subdued and introverted A perfectly self controlled man represents the Absolute in essence

Touching different levels of consciousness, this verse provides, through a chosen set of illustrations, the way of life of a contemplative who is related with himself and with external factors simultaneously

[10] *bijam mam sarvabhutanam*
viddhi partha sanatanam
buddhir buddhimatam asmi
tejas tejasvinam aham

Know Me, O Partha (Arjuna) to be the perennial seed of all beings I am the reason of the intelligent, and I the brightness of (those who are) the brilliant

The analogy of the seed is sufficiently familiar as the mustard seed of the Bible and in Indian literature in the *Chandogya Upanishad* (vi xii 1 3) where Svetaketu is asked to break open a tiny fig fruit and look for the very minute and negligibly existent origin of a giant fig tree Such a potent

essence is said to be both the Self of Svetaketu and the Absolute.

Having referred to the Absolute as a womb in verse 6, the analogical change in the same Chapter here can be justified by the Absolute being both the masculine and feminine principle at the same time. This combination is again more directly stated in IX, 17.

What is called the *pradhāna* (chief potency) aspect of nature, known to Sāmkhya and acceptable even to modern Vedāntins like Nārāyana Guru (*e.g.*, Chapter on *Māyā* in *Darsana Māla*), is the principle involved in this reference to the seed of all beings. The seed is further called *sanātanam* (timeless, perennial, eternal) and therefore abolishes any idea of duration which might be associated with a growing seed.

The references to the *buddhi* (reason) of the intelligent and the *tejas* (brightness) of the brilliant are to inner, spiritual qualities. With *a priori* reasoning certainty is attained through reason alone. Such forms of reasoning are not different from the Absolute. Brightness or mental alertness is also a spiritual quality, to be likened to a perfectly-tuned musical instrument, or to a sportsman in good form. There are popular notions of *tejas* (brightness) referred to as *brāhma-tejas* (brightness of the Brahmin) and *kshātira-tejas* (brightness of a warrior) which are mostly based on prejudices in the name of closed loyalties, determined largely by patterns of behaviour or dress.

Notice here in the structure of the verse that while the first line refers to hylozoic aspects, the second line brings in *tejas* (brightness) going beyond reason, and entering the domain proper to *purusha* (spirit) thus easing out the last vestiges of duality between *purusha* (spirit) and *prakriti* (nature) of Sāmkhya.

[11] *balam balavatām chā 'ham*
kāmarāga vivarjitam
dharmāviruddho bhūteshu
kāmo 'smi bharatarshabha

I am the strength of the strong, devoid of desire and passion. In beings I am desire which is not contrary to righteousness (*dharma*), O Leader of the Bhāratas (Arjuna).

The dual nature, if any, persisting between the higher and lower aspects of the Absolute is more forcibly and pointedly

effaced in this verse If it hurts nobody, the strong man's strength can be a pure quality *Its potentiality is not different* from that of the Absolute The verse boldly says that this same rule applies even to *kama* (desire) which in most religions (particularly in Buddhism) is considered to be the worst enemy of spirituality

Repressions and inhibitions can be exaggerated in spiritual life They can become a fetish The Gita here postulates the possibility of pure desire which is the essential vertical aspect the horizontal being the clash of desire with the interests of fellow men and fellow creatures The vertical remains pure and established in its own loneliness without social implications or motives Religion in the Gita loses its heavy negative character and is liberated as the free way of life of a philosopher or one dedicated to the Absolute

Note that while in the first line desire is referred to as something to be avoided this very desire is put on a pedestal *in the second line Desire here should not clash with dharma* (righteous pattern of behaviour) *i e* with the social principle

The term *bhutah* (beings) is meant expressly to cover not only human life but life in general The desire of beings here does not belong exclusively to the social context of human life

[12] *ye chai va sattvika bhava*
rajasas tamasas cha ye
matta eve ti tan viddhi
na tv aham teshu te mayi

Even those manifestations recognized as according with existence (*sattviki*) and active or dominant (*rajasi*) and dark or inert (*tamasi*) know them even to be My own I am not in them but they are in Me

The three manifestations or qualities of *sattva* (what accords with pure existence) *rajas* (active dominant) and *tamas* (dark, inert) are also included as *expressions of the Absolute They* are modalities of the same vital principle referred to in the last verse but these three are referred to here in a manner in keeping with Vedantic epistemology The Samkhya system has the three *gunas* (modalities of nature) Their distinct existence in nature it is true is not evident when examined objectively Specialization in nature expresses itself at three

different levels, of which the *tamasic* (dark and inert) and the *sattvic* (what accords with existence, the pure) mark two extremes. The hardened stem of a tree has become dead and inert and to that extent may be compared to the *tamasic* nature in man. The growing tip, bud or flower, on the other hand, corresponding to the *sattvic*, shows extreme sensitivity and specialization. The specific nature of the plant is best expressed here. A man of keen intelligence or sharpened wit is a human being who is perfected or specialized in a certain sense, and the best values which distinguish a human being have a chance to find at least approximate expression through such specialization. But we shall see from the Gita presently that even such specialization does not belong to true spirituality in an absolutist sense, although laudable as far as it goes in the relativist domain.

In between these two extremes nature expresses itself, as it were, in the *rajasic* (active, dominant) on the horizontal plane. A king engaged in the chase or in over-running a country is in a dominant or active mood, which has nothing to do with contemplative values. But such a mood is natural to man also. In nature it expresses itself in the urge for quantitative or numerical increase.

In thinking of these three levels we have primarily to keep in mind values and interests and not objects or mere states of mind. The scale of values implied here is one which can help us to compare the different types of spirituality as observed in the world of men and actions. There is the scholar of subdued habits who tries to study and understand the Absolute. There is the other who makes no effort and lapses into negative states, tending to get lost in hallucinations and superstitions. The overactive temperament leads to interests which lie altogether outside the contemplative or vertical axis.

Such a theory is further elaborated in other Chapters of the Gita. Here it is brought into discussion seriously for the first time, and the relativist nature of these three expressions of spiritual values is stated unequivocally. The object of this verse is to include relative and non-relative values together, under one comprehensive notion of the Absolute.

The constant use of *cha* (and, also) in this verse is to show that these three qualities are not to be thought of individually but are to be taken together as expressions of relativist value or reality. The slothful man is also to be included within the

world of contemplatives He is not outside the pale of spirituality—only, his spirituality is like a smoky lamp

Note the characteristic one way nature of the assertion in the last line which is reminiscent of the Biblical statement that those who are not with me are against me (*Matthew* xii, 30). A vestige of duality between subject and object seems to persist here, akin to the relation between the *purusha* (spirit) and *prakriti* (nature) of Samkhya While the Absolute is not in the manifested nature, the converse is asserted The relation is something like that between waves and ocean The ocean has waves but the wave is not the ocean Thus subtle relationship between God and man has been much discussed in Western theology The emphasis in this verse is on the necessary relation which should be understood to exist between the Absolute and nature which the Samkhya doctrine would have considered as distinct This is where the Vedantic revaluation comes in

[13] *tribhir gunamayair bhavair*
ebhih sarvam idam jagat
mohitam na 'bhijanati
mam ebhyah param avyayam

Deluded by these three manifestations (of value) this whole world is unable to know Me who am beyond them and unexpended

The world of values surrounding a man presents a variety which confounds him This variety belongs to the three levels distinguished in the last verse Superior or inferior though they may be in the relative sense, these values are not to be confused with the bipolar relation with the Absolute, which is what matters most in contemplative life The common man is attracted or repelled by these relative values in life, and therefore misses the bolder and more generous relationship with the Absolute which ever remains unchanged or unexpended The distinction between relative and absolute values is radical and one does not lead to the other in a graded way This verse attempts to bring this out

The word *param* (beyond) marks the distinction between relative and Absolute values The Absolute, though it is to be understood as including the relative, is beyond it In other words, a man whose interest is in Absolute value belongs to a distinct or superior order to all others, however relatively

praiseworthy they are. The holiest type of learned Brahmin who may represent highly refined *sattvic* (pure) qualities is still a relativist, to be thought of apart from one who represents that supreme wisdom of the Absolute in himself.

[14] *daivī hy eshā gunamayī*
mama māyā duratyayā
mām eva ye prapadyante
māyām etām taranti te

Verily this divine illusion of Mine (*māyā*) made up of the manifestations (of value—*gunah*), is hard to surmount. Those who seek Me alone, pass over this illusion.

After speaking of relative values which come under the three *gunas* (manifestations or qualities, modes of nature), it is rather unexpected to find the epithet "divine" applied to the *māyā* (illusion) which is the resultant of their interplay. This illusion has to be transcended before a man attains the Absolute. Thus divinity becomes an impediment rather than a help in spiritual progress.

The question naturally arises regarding the aptness of the epithet "divine" as applied to illusion, comprising relativist values. The justification, if any, lies in the fact that these three levels of value are conceived here as belonging to a contemplative scale of values. In so far as a contemplative epistemology is implied here, the term "divine" is justified. The word used, *daivī* means belonging to light, and the five senses are sometimes referred to as *devas* (gods, shining ones) in the Upanishads (e.g., *Isa.* 4). Anything related to understanding belongs to the order of luminous values. In this sense *māyā* (illusion) itself is to be understood in its own all-comprehensive glory, though still relative, before the Absolute can be grasped with all its pure implications. The recognition of illusion both as an enemy and an inevitable stepping-stone to the attainment of the Absolute is here recommended.

The term *gunamayī* (composed of modes of nature) comprises a partial definition of *māyā* (illusion). Nature itself is the most general effect of *māyā* (illusion) and is often described as *trigunātmikā* (essentially the same as the three modalities). Again we refer to the *Māyā* Chapter in Guru Nārāyana's *Darsana Mālā*.

The expression *duratyaya* (hard to go beyond) suggests that *maya* (illusion) is the last impediment before reaching the Absolutist position There are all sorts of religious values masquerading under the name of spirituality or holiness, whose resultant confusion of values has to be boldly torn asunder by one whose keen intelligence can penetrate into the domain of Absolute value It is suggested here that the notion of divinity itself, being still relativist, is to be discarded

The phrase *mam eva* (Me alone) is meant to underline the necessity of establishing strict bipolarity with the Absolute before true spirituality can be reached

[15] *na mam dushkritino mudhah*
prapadyante naradhamah
mayaya pahritajnana
asuram bhavam asritah

Not Me do evil doers, foolish, attain, lowest among men, their wisdom being distracted by illusion (*maya*), affiliated as they are to the demonic (or non intelligent) aspect of nature

This verse presents a picture of those who turn away from contemplative values Strong epithets are used by way of contrast with those who follow the contemplative scale of values indicated in the last verse, *daivi* (divine) and *asura* (demonic) being extreme poles in the context of possible human values

The phrase *asuram bhavam* (manifestations of a demonic order) is merely to bring out the contrast with the *daivi* (divine) of the previous verse

The first epithet chosen to mark the contrast is *dushkritinah* (evil doers) indicating that it is the promptings for action rather than interest in wisdom which distinguishes such fallen people They are condemned by expressions such as *mudhah* (foolish) and *naradhamah* (lowest of men) These lowest of men are not necessarily *sudras* (proletarians) or *chandalas* (outcastes), but even Brahmins who think in terms of *karma* (action) in which relativist values are involved Similar strong references are seen in XVI, 19 Note that the word *asuram* (demonic) is not applied to human beings here, but to the whole relativist world of values involving actions, as stated in *Isa Upanishad*, 3

[16] *chaturvidha bhajante mam*
janah sukritino rjuna
arto jijnasur artharthi
jnani cha bharatarshabha

Four kinds of the (doers of the) good are intent on Me, Arjuna, the distressed, the seeker of knowledge, the seeker of the goods of life, and the wise, O Leader of the Bharatas (Arjuna)

After condemning those prone to evil action, we now turn to those affiliated to the contemplative context Although the word *sukritinah* (those who do righteous action) contains the root *kri* referring to action, it is meant to cover all people affiliated contemplatively to a righteous way of life by intention to be good or virtuous in a purely spiritual and not social sense

The phrase *bhajante mam* (adore or intently think of Me) refers to a form of contemplative life rather than action The evil doers and the doers of good are taken as broad divisions applying to the whole of mankind, and not too literally, because contemplation does not necessarily envisage action

The four grades mentioned here, it should be noted, have nothing in common with the four *varnas* (colours or castes) classified in xviii, 41, ff Here the grades refer to varieties in contemplative life rather than to social orders, although it is true that the degree of necessity enters as a regulating factor even here The term *artah* (the suffering person) for example, is one who has the necessity of being relieved from suffering The bondage coming from ignorance is also a form of necessity, from which the *jijnasur* (seeker after wisdom) wishes to gain release, to feel free or happy When these gross and subtle factors of necessity are absent, the general tendency in man is to reach out for various grades of goods which will bring him pleasure (here referred to as *artha*) These three are still in the relativist world, however superior might be the "good" involved in the last case There is a true *jnani* (man of wisdom) however, whose case falls outside these altogether The unique nature of his position is singled out and underlined in the next two verses The wise man is only interested in the Absolute, hence his unique distinction

[17] *tesham jnani nityayukta*
ekabhaktir visishyate

priyo hi jnanino tyartham
aham sa cha mama priyah

Of these the wise man, forever united and unitively affiliated with the Absolute excels, for dear to the utmost limit am I to the wise, and he is dear to Me

In the first three cases mentioned in verse 16 the relation is neither unitive nor strictly bipolar The present verse makes it clear that only in that relation where a wise man thinks of the Absolute, does the bipolar condition exist which is a prerequisite for all true contemplation to exist When such a contemplative bipolarity is established, the distinction between the subject and the object, the meditator and the Absolute meditated upon, is abolished With equal validity one can say that the meditator is attached to the Absolute or that the Absolute is attached to the meditator

The terms *nityayuktah* (for ever united) and *ekabhaktih* (unitively affiliated) bring out the implications of this contemplative and necessarily perennial bipolar relationship

The doctrine of the Gita is sometimes called *ekantika bhakti-yoga* (yoga of lonely devotion) and phrases like *ananyas chintayanto mam* (meditating upon Me to the exclusion of everything else) of IX, 22 and *ananyayogena* (by a yoga with nothing extraneous) of XIII, 10 are favourite expressions found in many parts of the Gita They are meant to stress the same condition of bipolarity

The word *atyartham* (to the extreme limit) shows the Absolute nature of the relationship established in which there is neither superiority nor inferiority All true contemplatives enjoy equal status in holiness Spirituality may be said to reach its term or limit when it has to do with the Absolute

[18] *udarah sarva evai te*
jnāni tv atmai va me matam
asthitah sa hi yuktatma
mam eva nuttamam gatim

Honourable are all these but My firm opinion is that the wise one is the Self itself He of unitively established Self indeed remains in My path which has nothing higher

The same verity is restated here in terms of the Self rather than the Absolute. The theological distinction between the worshipper and the worshipped which still persisted in verse 17 tends to be abolished completely here, where the centre of gravity shifts as it were to the Self, which is the same as the Absolute in the science of the Absolute (*brahmavidyā*). *Ānanda* (Value), *Ātmā* (Self) and *Brahman* (the Absolute) are all interchangeable terms in *brahmavidyā* (science of the Absolute). (See Guru Nārāyana's *Darsana Mālā*, Chapter on *Bhakti* verse 5.)

The other three categories mentioned in verse 16 are not wholly condemned. Relatively they have their own status or value. The praise here however is subjected to the correction applied in verse 23 of this Chapter, where all relativist-minded persons are called *alpamedhasāh* (people of small intelligence). Following the time-honoured precaution of fulfilling rather than destroying anterior opinion, the term *udārāh* (honourable) used here should be understood as a form of " damning with faint praise ". The case of the absolutist is held aloft as most praiseworthy because he may be said to walk the highest or most unrivalled path of the Absolute itself.

The word *yuktātmā* (of unitive Self) understood as applying to a person who walks the way of wisdom, is the same in effect as a man who is merged in the Absolute, because the Absolute can be spoken of as a path as well as a reality. To identify the path of the Absolute and the worshipper of the Absolute is not against the spirit of Vedānta.

[19] *bahūnām janmanām ante*
jnānavān mām prapadyate
vāsudevah sarvam iti
sa mahātmā sudurlabhah

After many births the wise man attains Me. Such a great Self, thinking Vāsudeva to be all is rare indeed to find.

The religion of the Bhāgavatas came into vogue in India at a certain historic period when the teachings of the Upanishads had to be restated in a popular form. *Ekāntika bhaktiyoga* (yoga of lonely devotion) was their main doctrine, and the central figure of *āchārya* (teacher) of this religious expression was the son of Vāsudeva otherwise known as Krishna or

Vasudeva, who is identified with Krishna of the Gita This verse establishes the relation between the Vasudeva religion and the teaching of the Gita Krishna in the Gita represents the Absolute, and the man of wisdom, when he sees the whole of this universe and the Self as being unitively comprised in the Absolute as represented by Vasudeva, the superior Guru of this teaching, becomes finally and unitively established in wisdom, without any trace of duality between disciple and Guru—not to speak of worshipper and worshipped

The Bhagavata religion with its Vasudeva cult has other doctrines such as that of the *Vyuha* hypostatic personages such as Sankarshana etc which the Gita ignores and which are also against the spirit of Vedanta To see the principle that makes Vasudeva represent the Absolute is a very rare possibility of *mahatmas* (great Selves) alone Not only is such a *mahatma* (great Self) rare to find in this world at a given time, but such a perfected one of supreme wisdom must be the product of a long experience, when we speak of it in a workaday (*vyavaharika*) language

Before stating in more definite terms the difference between this doctrine of the Gita and the prevailing doctrines anterior to it, this historical reference to the origin of the new teaching becomes apt as in the case of the Bible, where Jesus says 'You have heard it said but verily I say unto you ' This verse serves therefore as a kind of punctuation mark between the *purva paksha* (anterior criticism) and the *siddhanta* (final conclusion) in this important Chapter before we enter into the more proper discussions in the next Chapters

[20] *kamais tais tair hritajnanah*
prapadyante nyadevatah
tam tam niyamam asthaya
prakritya niyatah svaya

Their wisdom distracted by such (or) such (other) desire (counterparts) they attain to other divinities, committed to obligations such or such belonging to each, prompted by their own particular nature (in each case)

This and the next four verses refer to the subtle dialectical relation between the spiritual aspirant and the object of the adoration that he might have as his ideal or goal There is in

each case the subject who is the aspirant or worshipper, and the ideal or goal, which is a value adored or aspired after

It is important for us to remember, in order to grasp the full import of these verses, that each aspirant has *his own natural counterpart* in the object of aspiration In each instance they are matched by a certain subtle, reciprocal relationship Innate interest in each case corresponds to the object of interest, and the law of like attracting like is implied in every instance

Before going to the subject of strict bipolarity as it should belong to the context of contemplation understood in the absolutist sense, the author here enunciates the principle of the same bipolarity which, even in the domain of relativist nature, normally prevails in every variety of spiritual affiliation In each case the good that accrues to the aspirant depends on the nature of the bipolarity established

Thus, although these five verses here deal with relativist spirituality, they are not unconnected with the Absolute Whatever benefits accrue to the worshipper even in the relativist domain, in principle belong to the Absolute, although they might seem to come from the object of worship Even the joy element contained in sense pleasure finally belongs to the Absolute, because inert matter contacting inert matter cannot produce joy Therefore whatever benefits are pleasurable in whatever context, relative or Absolute, must be thought of as resulting from the interaction of counterparts of a bipolar situation, in which subject and object are implied as explained above

The highest type of such a relationship is that in which the bipolarity is between the Self that seeks happiness and the Absolute, and in this last case the happiness "is a joy for ever' in an absolute sense

We now turn to verse 20 Pure wisdom tends to be dispassionate It is not interested in any but the highest value But relativist interests lie on a different plane They tend to deflect the spirit of man from the high path of pure wisdom, affiliating him to an object of interest which lies outside the line of the highest

These horizontal interests are not all of a mundane order There are pious and religious people capable of interesting themselves in deities or superior ideals which are raised above common sense pleasures All positive values which rise above the mundane level may be called values which shine. We

know that the Upanishads refer to the senses sometimes as *devas* (shining entities) *Anyadevatah* (other shining ones) here must be understood therefore as covering all relativist human values which do not fall in line with the supreme way of wisdom

The interest that such values hold out to the aspirant is one which draws him away from the true path of wisdom The expression *taih taih* (by them, by them) repeated twice, is intended to indicate that each relativist desire has its *corresponding* counterpart and that the attraction of relativist value is not promiscuous or haphazard as we have tried to explain The word *hrita* (drawn) implies a deflection from the true line of wisdom which is affected by affiliation to relativist values The prefix *anya* (other) before *devatah* (divinities) makes this clearer still According to the Gita IV, II other divinities cannot exist except in the sense we have explained They are called other divinities because they tend to compromise wisdom understood in the fullest sense

The repetition of *tam tam* (that that) further emphasizes the same factor of counterparts whose force has been missed in all translations but which is of the utmost importance The *niyama* (rule) or ritualistic injunction laid down in each case varies with each pair of counterparts involved If they are Vedic then ordinances of a Vedic order prevail, if with theological values *the forms of the cult laid down are to be* followed And so also with different forms of worship as for example in the worship of Ganesa etc Each has its own proper rule belonging to it These rules further have their basis in nature itself Pompous people for example love ceremonial Thus it is nature which decides which grade or kind of affiliation will be adopted in the domain of relativist spirituality The word *niyatah* (obliged) *implies an element of* compulsion which comes from the attraction between counterparts which exists in nature

[21] *yo-yo yam yam tanum bhaktah*
sraddhaya rchitum ichchhati
tasya tasya chalām sraddham
tam eva vidadhamy aham

By whichever (particular) form such and such a *devotee with faith wishes to worship* each to his own faith I confirm

Here again we find three pairs of demonstrative pronouns invoked to stress the bipolar nature of the relation involved in all spiritual seeking A man can have an erroneous faith in an object or a value which is not quite in keeping with the highest value, but every form of value, in so far as it is a value, must necessarily and implicitly at least have the Absolute in it, because, as we have stated earlier, two negative poles cannot attract each other Matter cannot be of value to matter itself

Whatever the counterparts involved in this dialectical situation, the value factor which emerges has to depend on the compensating counterpart Thus values must depend on something that is either one or the other of these counterparts, to be of interest at all The Absolute value represented by Krishna enters thus into the picture When value becomes fully absolutist the counterparts merge into one central unitive value

All three words, *tanum* (body), *bhaktah* (devotee) and *architum* (to worship) belong to the context of idol worship, but the intended meaning here is not limited to such a context When a man worships an image there is the subjective aspect the *bhaktah* (devotee) on one side, the act of worshipping with flowers (*archana*), and the image, form or object of worship, here called *tanum* (body)

These three are inevitable in any form of appreciation of value in a religious sense Even doctrinal values like worshipping a high God have these three factors involved Each man, according to his temperament or upbringing, likes or is dis posed to worship in his own way

It is the absolutist value which is implied in each relative value which relates the worshipper with the worshipped Even if a man is interested in a penny, it is the unitive pound which, in principle, is the object of interest indirectly though it may be The Absolute as we have said earlier, is a coin for which no amount of small change can suffice

Although thus the relation between the Absolute and the particular object of worship is of a unique order, there is, in principle at least a link between them, which, figuratively, might be described as a kind of sanction It is in this sense only that the toleration of other worship apparent in these verses is to be understood

The Absolute is necessarily behind every form of worship, however puerile it may be, but this does not mean that all

forms of worship have an equal status, as verse 23 already referred to makes evident.

The bipolar relationship which is established between the counterparts becomes confirmed or strengthened because some value factor must be implied in every such relationship, and the value, depending on the Absolute, may be said to sanction or confirm the relationship in each case, just in the form in which the relation, irrespective of circumstances, gets established

The wise man, however, chooses his interests, and thus rises in the scale of values, leading finally to the value which is Absolute.

[22] *sa tayā sraddhayā yuktas*
tasyā 'rādhanam ihate
labhate cha tatah kaman
mayai 'va vihitān hi tan

He, endowed with that faith, seeks the worship of such a one, and from him obtains his desires, the benefits being decreed by Me

The same principle mentioned in verse 21 is implied also in this verse The object which gains primacy here is faith and not the form of worship The indirect relation between the Absolute value and the relative value worshipped by the ignorant worshipper is further made explicit here

The words *kaman* (desires) and *hitan* (benefits) are interchangeable, except that the former refers to the object and the latter to the subject

[23] *antavat tu phalam teshām*
tad bhavaty alpamedhasām
devan devayajo yānti
madbhaktā yānti mām api

Terminable indeed is the benefit (accruing) to these of small intelligence, sacrificers to the divinities go to the divinities, but My devotees come to Me

This verse has to be understood in the light of ix, 23-25 and also the more general statement of iv, 11 Here, however, the reference is limited to *devas* (gods divinities, shining

ones) which are hypostatic entities still in the domain of relative ends It is pointed out that whatever value such a faith might have is finite and does not belong to true contemplation

The expression *alpamedhasah* (those of small intelligence) makes the depreciation quite clear Instead of condemning relativist worship, the Gita permits it while making clear how inferior a place it has It does not mix everything up under the nebulous term toleration claimed for Hinduism by many enthusiasts The distinction between the two kinds of devotion is clearly marked Krishna as a representative of the Absolute certainly prefers his devotees to come to Him rather than to go to the various gods especially of the Vedic world All relativist notions of divinity are disapproved though generously permitted out of respect for the feeling of others according to the spirit of III, 26

[24] *avyaktam vyaktim apannam*
manyante mam abuddhayah
param bhavam ajananto
mama vyayam anuttamam

Unreasoning persons consider Me as the unmanifest come to manifestation not knowing My supreme (value) unexpended with no superior

The Absolute is bevond all predication, whether methodological epistemological or actual This is what the last section of this Chapter beginning with this verse, wants to underl ne unmistakably before passing over to the detailed aspects of the Absolute in later Chapters

When we remember that in verse 2 of this Chapter it was promised that a full and all comprehensive picture of the Absolute would be covered in this Chapter, it is natural to expect that the final rounding off of the subject, in its more subtle implications would find its place in the present con cluding section of this Chapter which is theoretically most important

In verses 24 27 inclusive, a final attempt is made to com plete the picture of the unpreditable Absolute as far as description can do so

Verse 24 here enunciates the overall character of the Absolute in terms of manifestation and non manifestation

The verse admits of four possible ways of ruling out predications about the Absolute

First, it denies that *the manifest is the Absolute, though* derived from a prior unmanifest Second, it rules out the theory (which is more philosophical) that the unmanifest is the Absolute, although it attains to manifestation as the visible world Third, it rules out the position where a philosopher thinks that the manifest and unmanifest are dual aspects of the same Absolute, a position which Sankara (under the criticism of *bheda abheda vada* 'doctrine of difference non-difference' in the *Brahma sutra* commentary, I, iv, 20 and III, ii, 29) has taken so much trouble to refute Fourth, as a final residue there is the possible predication which states that *the Absolute is an entity to be included among entities abstract* or concrete which the mind is capable of conceiving statically or existentially Here the Absolute is not to be thought of as a thing at all The Absolute belongs to the unique order of the Absolute itself which has nothing in common with things or entities, however subtle or perceptual they may be The Absolute is the supreme and therefore above all, though comprehending all Nothing can therefore be predicated of it, but everything that is predicated derives its reality from it

Such a thoroughgoing interpretation of this verse is justified, not only in the light of the character of this Chapter, but also because *this unpredicable nature of the Absolute is found in* many Upanishads (see particularly *Mandukya Upanishad* verse 7)

The term *abuddhayah* (unreasonable) means those who have no proper method of reasoning, but only a vague form of religious fervour The Gita is never tired of harping on the word *buddhi* (reason) and its derivatives, which appear dozens of times in the work, and those familiar with the Gita cannot mistake the sense in which it is used here The rational philosophical attitude is given its due share in spiritual life here

The word *param* (beyond transcendent, or supreme) is generally used in contradistinction to *aparam* (immanent or non transcendent) As a methodological device for distinguishing the two aspects of the Absolute, the duality here might be *permissible But when we think of the* Absolute as a supreme goal or value, even this duality vanishes.

There is a value which has nothing else left outside or *beyond it The two epithets here at the end of the verse, avyayam* (unexpended) and *anuttamam* (with no superior) are

meant to mark the uniqueness of the Absolute in terms of value, rather than of mere philosophical reality.

That a value is here implied rather than a philosophical concept is further confirmed by the reference to life-values, both immanent and transcendent inclusively, in the last two verses of this Chapter. The meaning we have given is further clarified by VIII, 18-20, as we shall see.

[25] *nā 'ham prakāsah sarvasya*
yogamāyā samāvritah
mudho 'yam nā 'bhijānāti
loko mām ajam avyayam

I am not revealed brightly to all; shrouded as I am by the illusive effect of negative reality (*yoga-māya*) this deluded world does not know Me, unborn, unexpended

The clarity or the luminosity by which alone this supreme value called the Absolute is apprehended or appraised, is not given to the generality of human beings The reason is stated There is a veil produced by what is called *yoga-māyā* (the illusive effect of negative reality). The nature of this has puzzled commentators

Sankara gives two alternative explanations: first, that *māyā* is the resultant of the three *gunas* (value-levels or modalities) mixed together, second, that *māyā* belongs to God or Isvara when he has steadfastness of mind as a certain attribute.

Both of these explanations are still vague and unsatisfactory. We know of the word *yoga* as meaning union between two aspects of reality The immanent and the transcendent, the Self and the non-Self may be thought of as these two aspects, among many other possible pairs. Whatever the actual concept implied, there are two poles to be distinguished methodologically These poles interact and, to the extent that duality persists in the product of this bipolar interaction, it only succeeds in confounding Thus this form of *yoga* (union) tainted by dualism, tends to confuse our judgment in regard to the supreme value of the Absolute. In this sense *māyā* (illusion or error-principle) and *yoga* (union) go hand in hand to defeat the purpose of wisdom *Maya* being the most subtle and general principle of error or appearance in the human mind, *yoga-māyā* thus means the illusive effect of negative reality.

The epithets *ajam* (unborn) and *avyayam* (unexpended) further distinguish the Absolute as it is to be understood above Here the time factor is brought into these epithets leading up to the further reference to the relation between time and the Absolute in the next verse *Ajatavada* (doctrine of the world as unborn) and *vivartavada* (doctrine of the world as a presentiment) which could be taken as corollaries of *mayavada* (doctrine of the world as illusion or a principle of error) are implied in these epithets indicating that the notion of the Absolute refers to pure time or the eternal present as understood in the philosophy of Bergson or Plotinus

[26] *veda ham samatitani*
vartamanani cha rjuna
bhavishyani cha bhutani
mam tu veda na kaschana

I know the beings that are past present and to come O Arjuna but no one knows Me

• At first sight there seems to be a complaint here on the part of Krishna that true knowledge of him is not found in anybody The possibility of all knowledge of the Absolute seems thus to be shut off altogether

This superficial interpretation is not what is intended by the author Here he wants to point out that there are two ways of cognition by living beings or persons one which might be called static mechanistic or actual and the other the intuitive, dynamic or vital

The latter is the way given to the eye of contemplation in which the subject and the object become identified and a certain transparency of vision is established between the divisions of time past present and future

The former or static way is when beings are objectively established as mere expressions of the Absolute It is where the multiplicity of beings may be sa d to exist in an endless series of cross sections of reality which are not intu tively or vitally interrelated and there is no transparency of vision This static view shuts out any global or comprehensive vision of the Absolute Beings as such as specific entities of an objective order can never comprehend the Absolute fully The vis on of the Absolute is possible through the intuitive ident ty of subject and object The lamp of wisdom becomes clear to the extent

that the *triputi* (tri based division of subject, object and meaning) is transcended

To overcome ignorance therefore, the way of intuition is recommended The object of the whole Chapter is to indicate the way to know the Absolute comprehensively Hence the relevancy of the distinction here pointed out between the two ways of knowing

[27] *ichchhadvesha samutthena*
dvandvamohena bharata
sarvabhutani sammoham
sarge yanti paramtapa

From the delusion of the pairs of opposites arising from attraction and repulsion, O Bharata (Arjuna), all beings on being created, are subject to confusion (of values), O Burner of the Foe (Arjuna)

Dvandva (pairs of opposites) in the philosophical sense, is the subject matter of verses 27 and 28 Every duality implies values which produce conflict in the individual Attractions and repulsions under various categories create a general confusion of values through whose haze the individual gets lost. This is the *dvandvamoha* (confusion arising from opposites) referred to in both these verses The attractions and repulsions may be in regard to everyday values, or may comprise moral or spiritual values

When a being is born the very act of coming into contact with the material world starts the process of attraction and repulsion, of which the basic example of heat and cold is mentioned at the beginning of the Gita in II, 14 A child wants no extremes of temperature and therefore is caught between two such limits which may exist in the physical world *Dvandva* (pairs of opposites) here are not *dvaita* (duality) but refer to pleasure and pain in the actual world or refer to conflicting interests immediately present to each man.

This struggle between pleasure and pain is common to all beings and is indicated in birth itself From basic examples such as heat and cold we rise in a scale which includes all necessary values Where conflicts are neutralized, pairs of opposites become non-operative Then the vision regarding true values becomes clear

To avoid attraction and repulsion is therefore the attitude to be cultivated by the spiritual man, so that necessity can be transcended without conflict and the total content of the Absolute calmly contemplated.

The word *sarge* (on being created) gives this verse that turn by which it is joined in meaning to the last and the next verse. The main object of this Chapter, we should remember, is to show a complete picture of the Absolute so as to leave nothing over, as promised at the beginning in verse 2

[28] *yesham tv antagatam pāpam*
janānām punyakarmanam
te dvamdvamoha nirmukta
bhajante mām dridhavratah

But those persons of pure deeds whose sin has come to an end, freed from the conflict of pairs of opposites, adore Me with a firm resolve

This verse states the converse position of a man who has transcended the conflict arising from attraction and repulsion of pairs of opposites Here the terms *papam* (sin) and *punyam* (pure, good, holy) are introduced, lifting the values out of the necessary into the contingent field A man capable of choosing high yet normal human values and who is not confused by ordinary attractions and repulsions is the man of holiness here. It is not the ordinary sin and grace which again would imply duality, which are to be understood here Both sin and grace have been referred to as being outside the scope of a wise man's life as implied in v, 15, and in, *e g*, the *Kaushitaki Upanishad*, I, 4

These concluding verses are intended to lead up to the discussion in the next Chapter and further on, of the implications of the science of the Absolute In the Ninth Chapter a full dress discussion is to be given This explains why this Chapter stops short with a reference to a way of life, rather than stating a philosophical doctrine

The term *dridhavratah* (those of firm resolve) might at first sight suggest that even persons of the Gita's way of life observe rigorous or austere disciplines. It is not suggested here that they *should* observe such discipline, but rather that they *are* well established on a straight, normal or spiritual way of life, by their very freedom from the conflict of attractions and

repulsions. They naturally lead a life in which all activities are pure They do not deliberately choose observances ordained as holy as laid down in scriptures

[29] *jarāmarana mokshāya*
mām āsritya yatanti ye
te brahma tad viduh kritsnam
adhyatmam karma chā 'khilam

Whoever resorting to Me, strive for liberation from decay and death, they know That, that Absolute, all that constitutes Self-knowledge, and everything pertaining to (ritualistic) action.

Departmentalized streams of spirituality prevailing before the time of the Gita were brought into one convergent current in the previous verse. It was a personal attitude rather than a philosophical doctrine or a ritualistic observance which was stated

Here the same unitive tendency is carried over to a second degree of clarity. Any concept of freedom should be thought of as a breaking away from the chains of necessity. But necessity has many items comprising this binding chain The direst necessity of man is death itself, and next to it is the inescapable old age which creeps over all living beings.

In trying to cut oneself away from these general though subtle factors of necessity, one has to focus one's attention on a value which constitutes a second pole representing freedom in the Absolute in the fullest sense possible A dire disease requires a drastic remedy. The value which can form the legitimate counterpart of the suffering bondage of man, conceived in the most general terms, must be that Absolute which can be considered in the most all-inclusive manner.

Here even the distinction between ritualistic observance and perfect knowledge of the Absolute tends to be abolished in the person of the spiritual seeker He can be said to be a knower of *Brahman*, a knower of the Self, and a knower of the secret of all action, indifferently.

These three approaches to the knowledge of the Absolute are evident in this verse, to be further and more specifically referred to in the next verse, and the same three ways form the opening questions in the next Chapter.

[30] *sadhibhutadhidaivam mam*
sadhiyajnam cha ye viduh
prayanakale pi cha mam
te vidur yuktachetasah

Those who know Me, taking together what refers to existential (*adhibhuta*), hypostatic (*adhidaiva*) and sacrificial (*adhiyajna*) aspects they know Me in a unitive spirit, even at the time of their departure

The final focussing of the Self in relation to that supreme value called the Absolute generally takes place when a man is about to leave life here It is referred to in this verse as *prayanakala* (time of departure)

Conversely, if a man is capable of retaining a global or intuitive vision of the Absolute in all its three aspects mentioned, at the time of his passing, he may be said to have at that time a proper and complete vision of the Absolute as intended in this Chapter

The three departments of the way of wisdom mentioned here form the key subject matter of the next Chapter We need not therefore enter into their implications in any detail here We can say however that *adhibhuta* is the existential, subjective, *adhidaiva* the hypostatic, subsistantial objective and *adhiyajna* the relational interaction between the subject and object by which different absolutist values emerge We notice there are three seemingly different factors referred to in the previous verse, and also that there are four different problems with regard to them—all of which will be examined in detail in the opening verses of the next Chapter

The repetition of the preposition *sa* (with) is to emphasize that these three aspects have to be treated together by the seeker for wisdom without compartmentalization

This Chapter as a whole leaves us gasping in many respects We wonder why in the first place the elements like earth and water are brought into the context of pure spirituality We wonder again at the end of this Chapter, why a dying man s spirituality is referred to with approval

However, when we remember that the object of this Chapter is to cover the whole subject of *Brahman* (the Absolute) leaving out nothing belonging to it taking as it were a megascopic view, for the purposes of further elaboration we find that the intention of the author here is to mark out the extreme limits

within whose range lies the science of the Absolute A spirituality which ignores matter on one side and eschatology on the other side will remain incomplete The whole range of living interests reaching from considerations of equable temperature to the balancing of the spirit between sin and grace, are all referred to in this Chapter from the cosmological, psychological and value aspects These are to be followed up in the next Chapter

ity srimad bhagavadgitasupanishatsu brahmavidyayam
yogasastre srikrishnarjunasamvade
jnanavijnanayogo nama saptamo 'dhyayah

Thus ends in the Upanishads of the Songs of God, in the Science of the Wisdom of the Absolute, in the Dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, the Seventh Chapter entitled Unitive Way of Wisdom Synthesis

CHAPTER VIII

THE UNITIVE WAY IN (GENERAL) SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

[THE PERENNIAL ABSOLUTE UNITIVELY UNDERSTOOD — *Akshara-Brahma Yoga*]

[THE ABSOLUTE AS SAVIOUR UNITIVELY UNDERSTOOD — *Taraka Brahma Yoga*]

IN the general structure of the Gita this Eighth Chapter has a special purpose We have seen in previous Chapters how the *various streams of spirituality existing anteriorly to the Gita* have been taken up one after the other, and contradictions if any between them reconciled by the dialectical method which is called yoga

The apparent contradiction between wisdom and action (*jnāna* and *karma*) was initially resolved Then the revaluation passed on to spiritual expressions belonging to the ancient background of India, such as *tapas* (austerity), *dana* (charity) and *yajna* (sacrifice), which were reconciled or fused, one with another This survey was undertaken so as to bring them all under review at one glance and so that their sum total could lead to the full discussion of *brahmavidya* (the science of the Absolute) in the two Chapters which symmetrically occupy the centre of the Gita

But before the accomplishment of this task the author has to overcome a specific difficulty The transition from the highest form of spirituality belonging to the relativist context *to that properly understood in the absolutist sense has to be* presented without conflict

If we take the case of number and had to give the distinction between a number comprising one hundred digits and infinity we could safely say that for all practical purposes the difference would be negligible, although in principle a difference did exist *The Gita does not intend to banish practice* from precept Therefore in its form of revaluation in this

Chapter, superior relativism is made to tally with absolutism, although these strictly belong to different categories

In verse 16 of this Chapter we find that the world of Brahma (the highest Vedic god) is still considered to belong to the relativist aspect But in verse 26 the emancipated soul which passes through the path of light belonging to Brahma (the god) is said not to return any more In other words, judged by the effect, the soul or Self attains an Absolute status There is a subtle contradiction here which becomes inevitable and excusable in the light of the special purpose this Chapter has to fulfil When we remember that the Gita is a revaluation of both a philosophy and a way of life, both being treated together without duality, the apparent contradiction becomes understandable

Although starting with questions suggested at the end of the previous Chapter, this present Chapter covers many miscellaneous items, such as rebirth, yogic practices cosmological cycles, the bright and dark path of the soul, culminating in praise of a way of life which clearly belongs to the Gita as its own, in the name of yoga or dialectics, a way which is supposed to go beyond all prior particular expressions of spirituality

We notice also that this Chapter is conceived more in the spirit of a song reminiscent of a Vedic chant, than has been the case with the immediately preceding Chapters The emotional content comes into play, gathering up all trends of spirituality, before stating the case of the Gita more openly and philosophically in the two following Chapters

This Chapter has been named *Akshara Brahma Yoga* (The Perennial Absolute Unitively Understood) and also *Taraka Brahma Yoga* (The Absolute Unitively Understood as That which Bears or Carries away the Saviour) In spite of the miscellaneous character of the subjects covered, the justification of the title is sufficiently clear from verses 11 and 28 together

Arjuna uvacha

[1] *kim tad brahma kim adhyatmam*
kim karma purushottama
adhibhutam cha kim proktam
adhidaivam kim uchyate

Arjuna said

What is that Absolute? What (is) the Principle of the Self? What (is) action O Highest Spirit? What

is said to be the principle of existence, and what is spoken of as the principle of divinity?

[2] *adhiyajnah katham ko 'tra*
dehe'smin madhusudana
prayanakale cha katham
jneyo 'si niyatatmabhih

Here in this body, what and how is (to be understood) the principle of sacrifice, O Madhusudana (Krishna)? Again, how are You to be known by self controlled persons at the time of going forth from the body?

A volley of eight questions is fired by Arjuna Why does he not put them singly? The reason is evidently because the author *wants to fuse together and revalue the spiritual content* of many anterior traditional trends It is at the time of death that all currents of spirituality in the normal life of the individual tend to come together naturally into one master life-tendency *reaching out to fulfilment which can* be satisfied only when met by the wholesale wisdom of the Absolute going to be treated here It is thus that this Chapter gains its unity.

The opening question "What is that *Brahman* (the Absolute)?" *in its scope covers all secondary questions, leading up* to the heart of the subject with which the Gita is primarily concerned

To think of the Absolute in terms of the Self is a later development of the Upanishads From gods such as Indra and Varuna, and through a unitive Godhead the notion of a cosmological *Brahman* (Absolute) first found its place in the Upanishads This, in its turn, was transformed into a more perfected psychological *Brahman* in terms of the *atman* (Self) Thus *Brahman* (Absolute) and *atman* (Self) became interchangeable terms *Karma* (ritual) itself was historically connected with the notion of *Brahman* whether cosmological or psychological, at least in the Indian background *Brahmavidyā* (the science of the Absolute) was the natural outgrowth of Vedic sacrifices Thus the relevancy of the references to sacrifice are understandable

The reference to *bhutah* (elements) is also understandable in the light of the previous Chapter *Brahmavidya* (the science of the Absolute) is also related to the brighter values of life as

against the regretful or smoky values such as belong to the way of the forefathers Thus how these seemingly different questions hang together *vis-a-vis* the science of the Absolute is sufficiently clear, especially when *adhidaiva* (the principle of divinity) is going to be defined in almost heretical terms in verse 4, as pertaining to *purusha* (spirit) which has nothing theologically holy associated with it The *devas* ("shining" divinities) taken individually do not seem to matter here The hypostatic content of devahood or divinity as essentially belonging to the *purusha* (spirit) aspect of the Absolute (as distinct from its *prakriti*—nature, matter—aspect) is the important thing

The consideration of *yajna* (sacrifice) gives rise to two questions, "how" and "who" and is further limited to what pertains to the body here itself Arjuna wants an answer consistent with the science of the Absolute, not in a theoretical form but as it would apply to a personal way of life here and now, as also to one passing from this life to the hereafter All these questions and answers imply the common factor called *niyatatmabhih* (by those whose Self has been brought under control), though strict grammar may not require such a collective interpretation, and might restrict the epithet to the speaker of the last question only Thus the questions suggest and circumscribe the answers very definitely, to make the answers all the more telling

Sribhagavan uvacha

[3] *aksharam brahma paramam*
svabhavo 'dhyatmam uchyate
bhutabhavodbhavakaro
visargah karmasamjnitah

Krishna said
Perennial, the Absolute, supreme—(its) own nature principle of Self is called The creative urge, the cause of the origin of existent beings is designated action

The precise answers to the questions that follow are based on the science of the Absolute as revalued in the Gita This revaluation began as we said, with the Upanishads themselves There the rational heterodox schools of philosophy

joined hands with Vedic cosmological and eschatological schools to form one body of wisdom

The word *purusha* (spirit) for example, associated with the Sāmkhya system, having its origin in ancient books such as the *Tattva Samasa* and handed down to the *Samkhya Karika* of later date, is not to be identified with any one of the Vedic gods, although the word is not altogether unknown, especially in compound terms as *puranapurusha* (ancient spirit) or *purushottama* (highest spirit) The term *Brahman* (the Absolute) has had its own evolution in the Vedas, culminating in the Vedānta In the course of the revaluation to which these fundamental notions were subjected, *yajna* (sacrifice) itself came to be identified with the Absolute or Self

The definition of *karma* (action) contained in this verse is an example of how far this form of revision could be precise and philosophically sound *Karma* (action) as comprising every kind of action, human or natural in the universe, is brought under one sweeping definition consisting of the *visargah* (creative urge) *bhutabhavodbhavakarah* (which causes the origin of existent beings) This compound word lifts *karma* (action) from its ritualist limitations and gives it a philosophical status as clear and modern as that of Bergson who speaks of pure becoming Bergson himself, we know, derived such notions from Plotinus and even from pre-Socratic philosophers like Zeno *The notion is not peculiar therefore to any particular* philosophical school, Indian or Greek. Although Sankara would make it out that *karma* (action) would refer more directly to sacrificial offerings which, we must admit, is in keeping with the tendency so evident in many of the major Upanishads and thus natural and justifiable when critically examined in themselves, we prefer to take here the plainer and more universal meaning *independent of the Indian background*

Even the definition of the Absolute as "Perennial" or "Imperishable' points at a preference for the universal on the part of the author himself The whole intention of those definitions is evidently to make Vedic or Upanishadic notions *more universally* valid as belonging to a coherent science of the Absolute

Adhyatman (principle of the Self) *is referred to simply* and plainly as *svabhavah* (own or proper nature), a term which makes no distinction even between subject and object

The definition *aksharam brahma paramam* could be translated in three ways, making one or other of the three terms the

subject and the two remaining words the attributes As this definition is meant to be directly related to the question in verse 1, we prefer to make *Brahman* (the Absolute) the subject, and the other two words *aksharam* (perennial) and *paramam* (supreme) the attributes In finding the intended meaning of the other definitions the same rule holds good

[4] *adhibhutam ksharo bhāvah*
purushas cha 'dhidaivatam
adhiyajno 'ham eva 'tra
dehe dehabhritam vara

The principle of existence is the transient aspect, and spirit is the principle of divinity, what pertains to sacrifice is Myself here in the body, O Most Superior Bearer of the Body (Arjuna)

The abstract idea of the Absolute, when unitively understood, together with its various counterparts or aspects, is brought down to definite concrete terms of a Self lodged in the body of the subject here and now Between the Supreme and the concrete individualized subject is the amplitude within whose range the perennial unitive principle is to be understood for purposes of emancipation which is proper to the Gita teaching

Ritualistic sacrifice which is usually associated with the word *yajna* (sacrifice) is here identified with *aham* (I) which one would at first think had more to do with the *atman* (Self) When we permit the larger Self to be the connotation of the *aham* used here, such a Self could be construed as a value which constitutes the Absolute That sacrifice and the Self as the Absolute are interchangeable terms is allowed in the light of III, 15

Yajna (sacrifice) taken as a relation between the sacrificer and the god, attains the same status of an Absolute value In other words, as a principle, sacrifice occupies a neutral position between subject and object and thus has a new status which is neither the one nor the other, as implied in IV, 24. *Yajna* (sacrifice) and *atman* (Self) thus become interchangeable terms *Brahman* (the Absolute) in this sense, may be said to be lodged in the body without violating any theoretical principles. In fact such is the implication of XVIII, 61, taken together with III, 10

This identity of the Absolute with the Self on one side and sacrifice on the other is supported by the *Taittiriya Samhita*, I, vii 4 cited by Sankara as stating, Sacrifice is verily Vishnu . Note however, that here it is the Self of Krishna and not any human soul, which is identified with sacrifice This statement does not contradict what was said in vii, 12, because there it was specialized manifestation in nature which was discussed, and not the conscious Self as understood in a human and personal context

The epithet *dehabhritam vara* (O Most Superior Bearer of a Body) as applied to Arjuna here, should be understood in the same personal way, with this difference, that when Krishna refers to himself as living in his own body, the accent is on his higher nature, while in the case of Arjuna, the accent is on the ontological side In both cases it is the personality which is under consideration and, when neutrally conceived, the personality equals the Absolute This, in turn, equals the principle of sacrificial relationship The ontological or the existential aspect of the Absolute here referred to under *adhi bhutam* (principle of existence) is transient, in a state of constant flux or becoming It has its counterpart in the *purusha* (spirit) which is a subsistantial reality given to formal reasoning As such, it has a permanency, though still within the range of implicit duality This vestige of duality will be abolished in verses 20 and 21 as we shall see We should remember, however, that when we refer to the transciency or mutability of existence, this does not affect the archetypal concepts which are behind the multiplicity of created things If the permanence of such archetypal forms is denied existence itself would have no meaning

[5] *antakale cha mam e a*
smaran muktva kalevaram
yah prayati sa madbhavam
yati na sty atra samsayah

And he who at the time of death thinking of Me alone, leaves the body and goes forth, reaches My being, herein there is no room for doubt

We find now that we enter a section which might be called eschatological in character The reference to *antakale* (the time of ending), the termination of life is necessary to bring all

life-values into focus as it were, towards a unified stream of interest. When a person is faced with death, minor or trivial interests of everyday life tend to recede into the background, and a master-interest is bound to prevail.

The object of such interest, if it happens to be an Absolute value, and if a strict bipolarity is established between subject and object, can be expected to lead the subject along the highest path from which there is no return. Besides the duality between what is a whole-hearted life-interest which is happiness, and mere pleasures which attract and repel here, there is also another order of duality as between the relative world of manifestation and the world which is higher than either the manifested or the unmanifested.

The rest of the Chapter touches on these aspects in the spiritual progress of a person. Although the Chapter opens with many questions, in answering them, a unitively global or wholehearted way of life is chalked out by the author by the time we come to the end.

The importance of what a person thinks of before the time of death in determining his next birth in the context of the theory of reincarnation is familiar to us in various texts such as the *Yoga Vāsishta* and even in the *Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhārata*. A bee in a lotus trampled by an elephant in the *Yoga Vāsishta* is reborn as an elephant, and Rāvana killed by Rama in the *Rāmāyana* enters into the beatitude or salvation of Ramahood which is the same as Brahminhood.

Although we need not interpret the implications of this theory here in such graphic terms proper to the *Purānas* (legendary writings), it is not difficult to understand what is stated here in a more philosophical or psychological sense. "Like attracts like" may be said to be a law of life. To put it more precisely, counterparts tend to abolish each other in the Absolute. Arjuna as a disciple here is the counterpart of Krishna who represents the Absolute value. Strict bipolarity established between the two must sublimate whatever is relative in Arjuna in terms of the Absolute that Krishna represents. The implications of this theory broadly enunciated in this verse are worked out in greater detail in the rest of the Chapter, stage by stage.

Nā'sty atra samsaya (herein there is no room for doubt)—this is meant to underline the theory elaborated in the Gita which is one of its cardinal contributions, as evidenced in the two verses IX, 34 and XVIII, 65, whose significant positions we have

already emphasized It is a doctrine of paramount importance

[6] *yam yam va pi smaran bhavam*
tyajaty ante kalevaram
tam tam evai ti kaunteya
sada tadbhavabhavitah

Whatever manifested aspect a man might think of at death when he leaves the body that O Son of Kunti (Arjuna) he reaches whose thoughts always conform to that particular life expression

The general law is enunciated without reference to the Absolute in this verse As a man thinks he becomes This is a popular form in which many writers have stated this law well known all over the world The Buddhist *Dhammapada* recognizes this when it says at the beginning All that we are is the result of what we have thought There is a bipolarity implicit in life which determines our progress in general and above all what might be called spiritual progress

Relative progress is also subject to this law But when Absolute value enters in as the major counterpart of the situation then the progress may be said to be the highest or final

The expression *sada tadbhavabhavitaha* (always conforming to that particular life expression) refers to the general aspect of the law In other words a person might have at the time of death an intense and bipolar interest in a dearly beloved person The theory may be then understood to imply that he would be born aga n with a dearly beloved person as a condition in fulfilment of this desire If such a value was not a person it might be an object of worship or adoration such as a favourite form of deity or God which would perhaps apply better than a particularized interest which is bound to be partial or weakened in bipolar interest

[7] *tasmat sarvesl u kaleshu*
mam anusmara yudhya cha
mayy arpitamanobuddhir
mam evai shyasy asamsayah

Therefore at all times remember Me and fight when your mind and intelligence are surrendered to Me you shall come to Me (have) no doubt

Based on the general law of verse 6, what is recommended here for the disciple is to fix his mind on the Absolute represented by Krishna, not only at the time of death, but *sarveshu kāleshu* (at all times). The intention of the reference to the time of death in the earlier verses becomes clear now from the sense of this verse. It was merely to bring out into clear perspective the bipolar relationship demanded as a prerequisite for proper spiritual progress. It is not meant as a dictum for the practice of piety only just before death. One has to have sustained interest in the Absolute throughout a lifetime.

The expression *yudhya cha* (also fight) coming again as a direct reference to fighting when its need as a literary device has been left well behind, is rather striking, and has to be understood in the same light as in verse 13 of this same Chapter where there is again a double-edged or two-sided injunction given. There "Aum" has to be recited on the one hand, side by side with thinking of the Absolute. The reference to fighting has undergone various modifications in former Chapters as we have had occasion to point out. Between Arjuna as a warrior who drops his weapons and Arjuna as a disciple in the pure context of wisdom there are grades marking the transition between actual warfare, or what may be said to be the moral implications of warfare. The enemy in III, 43, becomes *kāmarūpam* (the form of his own desire) and further in IV, 42, the enemy becomes a subtler factor of intelligence merely, which is there named *ajnānasambhūtam* (an ignorance-born doubt), and all that Arjuna is asked to do is to stand up against it.

The reference to fighting in this verse therefore has to be credited with all these sense-modifications before its true implications as intended by the author can be understood. Life itself is spoken of in most languages as a fight. Lapsing into negative attitudes is the danger to be avoided, as much in spiritual as in actual life. Between these two a necessary vestige of duality is still consciously retained by the author. Religious practices belonging to different schools or traditions have all been brought under one view in this Chapter and it is too early to abolish even here this duality, so necessary for the discussion to be developed. But this vestige of duality will be discarded later. A cyclist can admire a sunset without the two acts coming into conflict, if the cyclist is a well-practised person. The secret of yoga implies this kind of harmony

between the two aspects of life Automatic activities of a reflex action can co exist with wilful or consciously chosen activity Physical fighting when found absolutely necessary cannot come into conflict with the conscious cultivation of philosophical absolutism The former is to be taken for granted or as permissive in certain rare circumstances, as Krishna here judges the present occasion to be The fault of recommending action and wisdom together does not arise in this rare instance

[8] *abhyasa yoga yuktena*
cetasa na nyagamina
paramam purusham divyam
yati partha 'nuchintayan

Meditating with the mind engaged in the yoga involving positive effort, undistracted by anything else, he goes to the supreme divine Person, O Partha (Arjuna)

Before passing over in the few verses that follow, into a rhapsodic, exalted adulation of the highest spiritual path, combining all the various disciplines this verse states the theme of this Chapter by way of a summary in plain unexaggerated terms

The reference to *abhyasa yoga* (yoga involving spiritual effort) indicates that we are still reaching the climax of the discussion of yoga The reference to *paramam purusham divyam* (the supremely divine person) cannot mean anything but the Absolute described in the plain words belonging to normal spirituality, religion or theology The rest of the verse only ensures the bipolar conditions required for true emancipation mentioned as the cardinal doctrine of the Gita

The epithet *divyam* (divine) as applied to *purusha* (person) does not suggest anything of the nature of ancestor worship but ancestor worship is not excluded as we shall see in the next verse Retrospective references are not altogether ruled out

[9] *kavim puranam anusasitaram*
anor aniyamsam anusmared yah
sarvasya dhataram achintyarupam
adityavarnam tamasah parastat

[10] *prayānakāle manasā 'chalena*
bhaktyā yukto yogabalena chai 'va
bhruvor madhye prānam āvesya samyak
sa tam param purusham upaiti divyam

He who meditates on the Poet-seer, the Ancient, the Ordainer, minuter than the atom, the Dispenser of all, of unthinkable nature, sun-coloured, beyond the darkness—

who meditates at the time of departure with a steady mind possessed of devotion, as also of the strength that comes from yoga, well-fixing the life-breath betwixt the eyebrows, he reaches that supreme divine Person.

After the plain statement of the position given in verse 8, these two verses rise into a crescendo of rhapsody. Verse 9 further makes up for the omission of restrospective values in spirituality specifically referred to by the phrase *anusmared yaha* (one who is to be remembered).

Terms like *purānam* (ancient) further accentuate the same retrospective vision. But the whole sense of the verses cannot be said to be within the scope of what may be thought to be ancestor-worship. Cosmological and philosophical, not to speak of theological and purely mystical epithets, are piled one on to the other here to make a confection of inimitable poetical sublimity.

The epithet *anusāsitaram* (the ordainer) is evidently theological, and *anor anīyāmsam* (minuter than the atom) is philosophical, especially reminiscent of the Vaiseshika school, and the epithet *ādityavarnam* (sun-coloured) marks, as it were, the limit of the poetic excess, reminiscent of Vedic chants. This last epithet can only have a deeply mystical import because of the suggestion implied here that when we travel retrospectively through the darkness of unknowing, we come again to a Light beyond all light, which can only be the Light of the Self.

Verse 10 continues the rhapsody but in prospective terms. The whole verse is intended to reveal a central global attitude of the spirit, especially of a yogi related to the Absolute according to the technique already covered. The reference to *prayānakāle* (time of departure) again here, is meant as before merely to reveal the prospective orientation of the spirit, and not necessarily to any form of piety that might be peculiar to

the time of death only Here again theology, yoga and worship are all suggested by the various expressions used

The phrase *bhruvor madhye* (centre of the eyebrows) for example, belongs to the context of yoga practice The reference to *divyam purusham* (divine person) is theological The attempt by the author clearly is to bring into one confluent expression the various spiritual streams of discipline This is the task to be accomplished by the end of this Chapter, as the last verse will sufficiently indicate, so that the deck is cleared, as it were, for the proper discussion of the central topic of the Gita.

The word *kavi* which can merely mean a poet or a man of imagination in the usual sense as referring to the Absolute, is to be specially noted here It has within its own range of meaning divinities that are omniscient dwelling in the region of the primordial sun From the immanent to the transcendent all personalized values can be covered by this expression

[11] *yad aksharam vedavido vadanti*
visanti yad yatato vitaragah
yad ichchhanto brahmacharyam charanti
tat te padam samgrahena pravakshyo

That imperishable (value) which the knowers of the Vedas speak of, which the Self controlled and passion free enter, which desiring they lead the life of the disciplined (Vedic) student, that state I shall succinctly describe

What has been stated in eschatological language is restated in this verse without reference to the time of death, but with the intention of focussing different trends of spirituality into one master channel directed towards a more finalized and revalued notion of spirituality

The different references in this verse therefore to (1) the *vedavid* (Veda knower), (2) the *yati* (anchorite or ascetic) whose characteristic is self control, and (3) the *brahmachari* (initially a Vedic student, but later connoting one who walks the path of the Absolute as understood in the Upanishads) This collective enumeration is not a new method but is already familiar in the Upanishads—e g *Katha Up* II, 15 the object being the same, namely the revaluation and restatement of existing trends in spirituality

The expression *aksharam* (imperishable) is meant to refer to the content in most generalized terms of Vedic learning taken as a whole Whatever may be the particular deities or gods mentioned specifically in the Vedas, when taken together the whole of the Vedas may be said to be directed to the under standing of what is here called the Imperishable

The word *vedavid* occurs in the same sense in xv, 1, and there as here, it is employed to mean a person who is able to take a comprehensive or a wholesale view of Vedic teaching Though still relative, Vedic teaching taken in this way can have a counterpart or an implied subject matter which could be spoken of as the Imperishable, thus approximating to the Absolute as far as it is possible within the relativist context of such a religious scripture The great fig tree or banyan referred to in xv, 1, represents a vision of the Absolute as seen by one who is still a relativist But in so far as such a vision takes a wholesale view of humanity, it becomes a respectable objective even in the more truly contemplative context What the Vedic visionary can see is therefore held up to view in laudatory terms in this present verse, although on final scrutiny this Chapter holds a more thoroughly absolutist pattern of spirituality

The term *visanti* (enter) states a goal, not in terms of under standing as in the former case, but as conforming to a way of life *Rajas* (passion) is the enemy of spirituality as understood in the Gita (iii, 37) The importance of the phrase *vitaragah* (those passion freed) here lies in its being the sole qualification for spirituality

Even in the case of a simple *brahmachari* (dedicated student on the path of the Absolute) he has a desired end, though perhaps of a more theoretical nature But he submits himself voluntarily to certain disciplines or ways of life because of such an aim or desire Whatever the nature of the goal, whether conceived in terms of wisdom or discipline, even with ends and means treated without difference, the subject matter or con tent of spirituality remains the same, which is the Absolute understood in the Gita Such a neutral state is implied in the word *padam* (foothold, base, state)

The phrase *samgrahena* (in brief) reveals unmistakably the nature of the task which this Chapter sets out to accomplish It is neither a merely religious, a philosophic nor a yogic goal which is kept in view, but a goal which is all these at once

Note that the eschatological reference is not omitted even in this restated form, as the words *tyajan deham* (leaving the body) indicate Life-values, whether here or hereafter, are thus brought together without duality

Those inclined to see a reference here to particular *hatha* (effort) yoga practices, would be departing from the simpler rational meaning implied here The numerous references in the Upanishads should be our guide in this matter

The *parama gati* (supreme road) referred to here should be distinguished from the lesser more relativist ways spoken of in some of the verses which follow It is easily reached, as verse 14 points out The distinction is further elaborated in verses 16 and 23, and in verse 26 it is definitely stated that there is a path treading which one never returns The Gita takes the stand on this finalized idea of the Absolute, and any other references to paths less absolutist should be looked upon as incidental to the discussion of the whole subject, as intended by the comprehensive survey of this Chapter

[14] *ananyachetah satatam*
yo mam smarati nityasah
tasya 'ham sulabhah partha
nityayuktasya yoginah

One without extraneous relational mental interests, remembering Me day in and day out, to such an ever unitively affiliated man of contemplation I am easy of attainment, O Partha (Arjuna)

This verse states that the path indicated by the Gita is easy Elsewhere it was often repeated that it was rare and difficult as for example, in vii, 3

The facility implied here is in the sense that it is a simple matter of establishing a relation between the relative and the Absolute which is the prerequisite for spiritual progress When the two important conditions for such a bipolar relationship are strictly fulfilled the results take place spontaneously and with ease These two conditions for the ensuring of this bipolarity are referred to here quite specifically

The first condition is implied in the expression *ananyachetah* (one without extraneous relational mental interests) For strict bipolarity to be established all interfering third interests have to be carefully eliminated

The second condition is implied in the term *nityasah* (day in and day out) It is not enough that the relation should be established in bipolarity for any limited period It has to have an undeflecting character which has to be maintained in terms of eternity rather than in terms of time

The nature of the conditions emphasized here are further underlined in the last phrase *nitya yuktasya yoginah* (by the ever unitively affiliated man of contemplations) It is the yogi or the contemplative and not a mere devotee or religious person who is always to be kept in mind in the Gita and, though all paths lead to him as stated earlier, it is he who fulfils these conditions, who finds the path easy to tread

[15] *mam upetya punarjanma*
duhkhalayam asasvatam
na 'pnuvantu mahatmanah
samsiddhim paramam gatah

Having attained to Me, they do not return to this transitory abode of suffering, they having reached the highest attainment

The Absolute character of the highest path of wisdom is for those rare or great ones who are different from relativists of whatever kind or grade who may be mentioned hereafter The one characteristic which distinguishes such absolutists is that they do not return to a life of suffering at all This never-returning characteristic is always referred to as the chief feature, not only elsewhere in the Gita, but throughout the Upanishads One who returns to another birth, however superior, is still a relativist, but the absolutist is one who, once gone, never returns This makes all the difference between the two categories

The reference to *duhkhalayam* (abode of suffering) on the one hand, and to *mahatmanah* (rare great ones) on the other hand, who can escape such suffering by simple affiliation to the way of the Absolute by its implicit contrast, gives a certain poetic sublimity to this verse

[16] *a brahmabhuvanal lokah*
punaravartino rjuna
mam upetya tu kaunteya
punarjanma na vidyate

All worlds beginning from here to the world of Brahmā are subject to phenomenal repetition, Arjuna; but on reaching Me, O Son of Kunti (Arjuna), there is not another birth.

Before passing on to a cosmological discussion after this verse, the two contrasting positions are clearly brought into relief here. It should be noticed that the world of Brahmā, although it has the highest status cosmologically, as a goal to be attained in the Vedic context, is still relegated to a secondary position, as against the goal represented by *Brahman*, the Absolute.

Beginning from this work-a-day world or everyday realm, we can imagine a series of graded worlds, each of which represents the goal to which the religious man aspires. The highest of such realms known to the Vedas is still not the best as understood in the Gita. Krishna here not only represents the Absolute cosmologically, but also psychologically, and even in every other spiritual context known till then.

The cosmological or theological colorations that might limit the notion of the Absolute are eliminated by the striking contrast here. The non-returning character is again referred to as the distinguishing feature. Cyclic repetition of phenomena is the characteristic of the relativistic world.

[17] *sahasraya yuga paryantam*
ahar yad brahmano viduh
rātrim yugasahasrāntām
te 'horātravido janāh

Those who know that the day of Brahmā is a thousand unit periods in the cosmic cycle, and the night of a thousand (such) units, they are understanders of the day and night (principle).

A discussion of certain cosmological principles follows in this section up to verse 19 inclusive. Just like the alternation of day and night, a theory is postulated here which implies that Brahmā, the Author of creation, belongs to a cycle of existence which has two aspects. A "day" of Brahmā comprises a thousand *yugas* (unit periods in the cosmic cycle), whatever the duration of such a period may be in terms of actual time as we understand it empirically, the important fact referred to

here is the alternation A thousand units of a bright period are balanced by a thousand periods of a dark period Those who can understand this alternating ambivalent principle implicit in the notion of the Absolute theologically or cosmologically are referred to here as *ahoratravido janah* (understanders of the day and night) *i e*, those who can intuitively enter into all the implications of such a theory of alternating day and night in eternal duration

[18] *avyaktad vyaktayah sarvah*
prabhavanty aharagame
ratryagame praliyante
tatrai va vyaktasamjnake

From the unmanifested all the manifested proceed at the coming of day at the coming of night they merge in that same named the unmanifested

The same alternation is described here in terms of manifestation and dissolution Although creation as we experience it daily is not dissolved at night but continues actually outside and virtually inside our own consciousness in the larger sense of a cosmology conceived from a contemplative angle this alternation can be spoken of as taking place more strictly or theoretically as between the manifested and the unmanifested In the wakeful state everything has actuality In the states of sleep and dream existence has only a virtual status When we speak in terms of consciousness, in this sense it is that this verse declares that the manifested emerges from the unmanifested and returns to it when night comes This is not to be taken in the language of the positive sciences, but should be understood as belonging to the contemplative context where consciousness, rather than objectivity is given primacy In the phrase *tatra eva avyaktasamjnake* (in that same named the unmanifested) the insistence on it being the same indicates that the unmanifested is a more inclusive or general notion akin to the concept of *mahat* (the great) or *Brahman* (the Absolute) as understood in Vedanta This implication is clarified in verse 20

[19] *bhutagramah sa eva yam*
bhutva bhutva praliyate
ratryagame vasah partha
prabhavaty aharagame

This very same aggregate of beings coming into existence again and again merges, subject to necessity, at the onset of night, O Pārtha (Arjuna), and comes into being at the coming of day.

This verse states the same alternation conversely, drawing further attention to the everlasting continuity of this alternation, as it were, in the amorphous matrix of eternal duration. Further, it adds the complementary fact that it is *sa eva ayam* (this very same) aggregate of beings, once merged in this matrix, which is again merged, after being created afresh. Things are viewed here as if eternally existing, *sub specie aeternitatis*.

Thus the identity of particular objects as such remains constant and unchanged in principle. The emphasis here, taken with *tatra eva* (that same) of the previous verse, gives our interpretation sufficient justification.

[20] *paras tasmāt tu bhāvo 'nyo*
'vyakto 'vyaktāt sanātanah
yah sa sarveshu bhūteshu
nasyatsu na vinasyati

But beyond this unmanifested there is yet another unmanifested perennial existence which among perishables itself does not perish.

This verse finalizes explicitly what has been implicitly stated in the two previous verses, according to which the unmanifested, instead of having a status merely as the opposite of the manifested, has a reality which is higher still, approximating to the wonder of the Absolute.

While this unmanifested comprises both the manifested and the unmanifested, it is here referred to as being distinct from the latter, and must belong to an epistemological order of its own. The force of the words *parah* (higher) and *tu* (indeed) employed by the author to underline the distinction between the mere unmanifest in the dualistic context, and the unmanifest which knows no duality at all, and approximates itself to the Absolute becomes thereby quite justifiable and understandable. This unmanifest is further called *sanātanah* (ancient or perennial). It is not subject to the alternating process of manifestation and destruction. The larger and more comprehensive concept of the Absolute gives room to the dual process

of emanation and dissolution without contradicting or compromising such a view

The paradoxical statement at the end of the verse has the familiar ring of that variety of wisdom treated in the Upanishads It seems to admit of a vague middle ground between two opposites or contradictions Usual logic, however, does not allow, by its law of an excluded middle, of such a middle ground The reasoning here therefore is taken to be intuitive or contemplative rather than mere mechanistic ratiocination as in the hands of Locke, Hume and Mill

The central Absolute value indicated here is the basis of the notion of the Absolute as understood in all Vedanta writings The *sunya vada* (nihilism) is often attributed to rationalistic approaches like Buddhism because such schools do not arrive at a clear notion of the Absolute as something of a superior status or order, as implied in this verse

[21] *avyakto 'kshara ity uktas*
tam ahuh paramam gatim
yam prapya na nivartante
tad dhama paramam mama

That unmanifested, it is called the imperishable That they speak of as the highest (spiritual) path, attaining which they return not Such is My supreme abode

Here the seal is finally placed on the notion of the Absolute arrived at in the last verse, as a living word, as a path and as an abode, thus giving it a status as a value and not merely a logical or academic abstraction

The word *mama* (My) which refers to the personality of Krishna himself as a representative of the Absolute, makes such a value come well within the ambit of human interests On one side there is the seeker and on the other side there is his own final goal, both being treated in terms of human value for purposes of final identification one with the other through contemplation

[22] *purushah sa parah partha*
bhaktya labhyas tv ananyaya
yasya 'ntahsthani bhutani
yena sarvam idam tatam

This is the supreme Spirit, O Pārtha (Arjuna), within whom all existences abide and by whom all this is pervaded, who is attainable however, by devotion exclusive (of all extraneous factors).

A further degree of personalization is brought about here. The manifested world which we see before us is pervaded by a *purusha* (spirit) which is here referred to as the highest. These two aspects, the manifested world and the spirit, which still reflect the duality of the Sāmkhya (rationalist) system, are meant to be understood unitively without vestige of duality. Any vestige will be finally abolished in the next Chapter as we have said, and is here retained only for purposes of discussion.

The emphasis on devotion which knows no other, is again to secure the bipolar relation already referred to. All manifested beings are here referred to as having their dwelling within the spirit. Here again the duality implied will be progressively abolished.

[23] *yatra kāle tv anāvrittim*
āvrittim chai 'va yoginah
prayātā yānti tam kālam
vakshyāmi bharatarshabha

That (cosmological) occasion in which yogis go forth (causes them) to return or not to return (as the case may be)—that temporal circumstance, I am going to tell you, O Chief of Bhāratas (Arjuna).

The Gita in this Chapter wants to stress the way of intelligence or light. The reference to the way of darkness is resorted to merely for purposes of contrast.

Rather abruptly, it would seem, this verse begins the final section of this Chapter. But when we notice a subtle difference implied here, it will not be difficult to see how the unity of this Chapter has been maintained. The yogi who is said to return and the yogi who is said not to return, are not strictly contradictory cases. The one who does not return has a unique status by himself, while the one who returns comprises all grades of spiritual aspirants, from the most inferior to the most superior. These latter are still to be regarded generally under the category of relativist seekers. The contrast is

therefore not one of opposites merely, but of two distinct orders of reality, one having *nothing to do with the other*

The relativists tread the dark path while the absolutists may be said to tread the bright path In terms of pure understanding the contrast may be said to be again maintained

In this last section, in keeping with the rest of the Chapter, this trace of duality is retained for the sake of discussion The object of the author here is finally to praise the absolutist way as belonging to the path of light (in verse 24) and to relegate all other ways, however superior they might have been as found in various scriptures, including even the propitiation of Brahmā, the highest of the Vedic gods, to a lower status, as belonging to the path of darkness (in verse 25) The intention is *unmistakable from the last verse of this Chapter* (verse 28) where it is finally stated with an exalted rhapsodic style

The reference to yogis here is justified by the fact that the whole of the Gita is a *yoga sastra* (textbook on unitive understanding or applied dialectics) and therefore it is with the *yogi or man of contemplation that the text here is primarily* concerned

The reference to time of death here, as we have said already, is merely to bring out the radical distinction between those who return and those who never return, because this is the familiar idiom by which such a distinction is understood throughout Vedanta literature

[24] *agnir jyotir ahah suklah*
sanmasā uttarayanam
tatra prayata gachchhanti
brahma brahmavido janah

[25] *dhūmo ratris tathā krishnah*
sanmasa dakshinayanam
tatra chandramasam jyotir
yogi prapya nivartate

Fire, light, day time, the bright fortnight, the six months of the (summer) northern solstice, going forth on that (cosmological) occasion, those people who can understand the Absolute reach the Absolute

Smoke, night, the dark fortnight, the six months of the (winter) southern solstice, on that (cosmological)

occasion, the yogi attaining the lunar (relativist) light, returns

In verse 24 astronomical references and the reference to the element of fire may be elaborately commented upon in the light of scriptural and other writings, endlessly However, we can see in a simple fashion the overall intention of the author The meaning has to be derived from its contrast with the content of verse 25, where all dark or negative factors, astro nomical or elemental, are enumerated In verse 24, therefore, it is that side of existence dominated by light which is the same as intelligence which is comprised by all the allusions to the bright half of the month and the northern path of the sun, where more light prevails Guru Narayana's *Darsana Mala* (Garland of Visions of Reality) refers (Chapter 1) to the same as the *taijasi* (the bright side) and the *tamasi* (the dark side) of existence That the same contrast is in the mind of the author here is revealed by verse 26 where the paths are specifically referred to as the *suklakrishna gati* (white and black paths) To think of *devayana* (way of the divine or shining ones) and *pitriyana* (way of the fathers or ancestors) would not be repugnant to the contrasting description stated in more general and scientific terms here

The contrast in verse 25 does not hold good when closely examined, because it is here again evidently the same yogi of verse 24 who follows the path of some light, however feeble it may be, there referred to as belonging to the moon So even here the yogi is not following total darkness, but only a relatively dim light.

The highest path of the lower order of verse 25 may approxi mate ever more closely with the path of pure absolutist light implied in verse 24 but however much they may come together, the two paths are not the same when tested by the touch stone of returning (*i e* relativism) and non returning (*i e* pure absolutism) This is the subtle contrast which this Chapter, as the one occupying a special position as we have said in the Gita as a whole, intends to clarify, before coming to its own fully revalued statement

[26] *suklakrishne gati hy ete*
jagatah sasvate mate
ekaya yaty anavrittim
anyaya vartate punah

These, the white and the black, are known to be in this world the twin perennial paths, by one of them one attains to non return, while by the other one comes back

The contrast between the *sukla* (white or bright) and *krishna* (black or dark) twin paths is brought into full relief here It is around this question of return or non return that the contrast is to be understood The superior or white path of absolutist wisdom is favoured for purposes of more thorough-going treatment in the Chapters that follow

The expression *sasvate* (" two " everlasting) would suggest that both have a perennial status in this world Although this duality is present in this world, unity is to be established even between them by the yogi who may be said to sacrifice the lower black in favour of the white

[27] *nai te sriti partha janan*
yogi muhyati kaschana
tasmāt sarveshu kaleshu
yogayukto bhava 'rjuna

Understanding (the basic nature of) these two paths, O Partha (Arjuna), one of contemplation is not confounded at all, therefore at all times, O Arjuna, be unitively established in yoga

The duality that seemed to be finalized as everlasting in this world is not so rigidly dualistic when comprehended in terms of wisdom This wisdom consists of unitive understanding, otherwise known here as yoga

These paths, though everlastingly different as mentioned in the last verse, can still, it is here suggested, be brought under unitive vision by the yogi, and when thus brought to union, all confusion and perplexity is abolished by the one who understands their true nature Though different they belong to the same principle of light, the dark side being only less bright

Relativism, though it is opposed to absolutism in a certain sense, is capable of being absorbed into the Absolute by the ascending dialectics of yoga Such a yoga is here recommended as being worthy of cultivation at all times

We can recognize that a dream is different from waking reality, but the knowledge of dream and waking reality as

being comprehended in one global consciousness gives the yogic view which abolishes conflict. Similarly the recommendation here is that of knowing the nature of the higher and the lower paths properly, both becoming unitively comprehended in the wisdom which results from yoga, and which Arjuna is asked to cultivate for all time.

[28] *vedeshu yajneshu tapahsu chai 'va*
dāneshu yat punyaphalam pradishtam
atyeti tat sarvam idam viditvā
yogī param sthānam upaiti chā 'dyam

> Whatever meritorious result is found implied in the Vedas, in sacrifices, austerities and in gifts, the contemplative who is unitively established, having understood this (teaching here) transcends all these and attains to the supreme primal state.

By way of rounding off the discussion in this Chapter where different trends of extant spirituality have been fused and revalued and unitively brought under a comprehensive vision in terms of wisdom, this verse finally in its more archaic metre, refers to the items of spirituality once again, and dismisses all of them in favour of this simple unitive wisdom to which we have arrived after all the systematic reasonings in this work up to this point.

Notice here that it is the word *punya* (holy) suggesting religious merit which is taken up. The ordinary religious man is concerned with his religious merits, by the accumulation of which he reaches final emancipation. As if to give an assurance to such a natural mental disposition it is pointed out here that the way of wisdom whose character is essentially one of simple knowing as suggested by the term *viditva* (having known) by which the unitive contemplative or man of wisdom *atyeti tat sarvam* (transcends everything) is superior to the way of accumulation of merits through acts of piety, learning, austerity, sacrifices, etc.

The reference to *ādyam* (primal) suggests that a clean slate is left for proper spirituality to begin from this Chapter onwards. The pristine purity is regained by the yogi capable of contemplative wisdom. Such is the position we have reached at the end of this Chapter.

The goal referred to in terms of a divine person or *purusham divyam* in verse 10 has been changed here into a state of pristine original purity In the light of the discussions that followed verse 10, all vestiges of Samkhya (rationalist) duality or Vedic divinity in thinking of the supreme state, are thus removed, and so the stage is set for the direct pronouncements of Krishna himself in the two Chapters which follow and which occupy the symmetrical centre of the work

ity srimad bhagavadgitasupanishatsu brahmavidyayam
yogasastre srikrishnarjunasamvāde
aksharabrahmayogo nama 'shtamo 'dhyayah

Thus ends in the Upanishads of the Songs of God, in the Science of the Wisdom of the Absolute, in the Dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, the Eighth Chapter entitled The Unitive Way in (General) Spiritual Progress, (The Perennial Absolute Unitively Understood)

CHAPTER IX

UNITIVE CONTEMPLATION AS A ROYAL SCIENCE AND CROWNING SECRET

Rāja-Vidyā Rāja-Guhya Yoga

In many respects as we have indicated more than once, we arrive here at a section of the Gita in which its best contribution as a revaluation of ancient wisdom, both in its exoteric and esoteric aspects, as well as in its pure and practical aspects, taken together, is stated.

For the first time we notice that the initiative passes from the questioner to the answer in the person of Krishna, who himself represents the Absolute. The disciple's initiative begins to be weakened. The *rapport* established between him and his Guru becomes more complete and the mutual adoption implied in the situation becomes more patent. There is no complaint on the Guru's part of carping by the disciple, nor any complaint of the Guru confusing his mind on the part of Arjuna.

From the opening of this Chapter the Guru himself begins to occupy the centre of the stage. He is at least as interested in teaching as the disciple seems to be in learning.

The nature of the subject-matter of this important Chapter is sufficiently clear from the opening verses themselves. It can be readily seen why the title of the Chapter itself is taken from the second verse.

As we scan the rest of the Chapter we find there is a more balanced symmetry maintained here than was possible hitherto, although at the end of Chapter VIII the author managed to state the case of the dichotomous principle involved in this science as closely and clearly as was possible (see VIII, 26).

The Absolute represented by Krishna is made to declare unequivocally in verse 29 of this Chapter that he is neither interested in the good or the bad people, but is indifferent to both of them alike. This aloofness and neutrality denotes the

highest level of purity that can be attained in the teaching of the Gita Even the importance of his own personality tends to be minimized in this Chapter The Vishnu, the *avatar*, the Krishna *aspects, tend to be effaced and merged into a comprehensive* and pure notion of the Absolute in the light of the finalized teaching contained here It is only the foolish, according to verse 11, who are carried away by the manifested aspects and are unable to grasp the notion of the Absolute in its purity and totality

The mystery and wonder of the Absolute is enhanced by *verse 5 where all mutual interdependence between the phenomenal* and the noumenal is cleverly cancelled out and all theological scaffolding removed, so that the notion of the Absolute emerges in all its purity and glory

The relative aspects of holiness or spirituality are again alluded to only to be brushed aside as being of no consequence, as if with a little gentle play of sarcasm in verses 20 and 21 *This cannot be missed by the eye of the keen critic*

The importance of recognizing the Absolute with higher reasoning in terms of principles is referred to clearly in verse 24 Although it sounds very tolerant of all approaches to the Absolute, it still insists most emphatically laying down that they fall who do not know the nature of the Absolute in a manner in keeping with *tattvah* (first principles) While most *forms of worship are tolerated or permitted, it is the wisdom* of the Absolute alone which can emancipate

The Chapter ends by a reference to the hope which the way of the Gita gives to all people without distinction, whether they are the worst sinners, proletarians, or women The open way here does not exclude or shut its doors to anyone

As a kind of final mark of punctuation we have the famous verse 34 repeated *in almost identical form in* XVIII, 65 at the end of the whole treatise Even taken with the slight variation, *this verse has a significance which should never be lightly* overlooked The verse marks the middle of the work and therefore holds a very strategic position *rhetorically in the* Gita teaching as a whole

It concerns what we might call the central doctrine of the Gita, if such a doctrine could be singled out at all The establishment of a strict unitive relationship with the Absolute as understood through the various Chapters of the Gita is what is recommended as the best way to attain the Absolute which is *the same as the highest goal or salvation*.

Such a unity between the two has to be further understood to be at every conceivable level or form of spiritual affiliation whether the form is of worship, personal surrender or yogic unity

Sribhagavan uvacha

[1] *idam tu te guhyatamam*
pravakshyāmy anasūyave
jnānam vijnanasahitam
yaj jnātva mokshyase 'subhat

Krishna said
To you indeed who do not mistrust I shall declare this profound secret of wisdom together with its applied aspects, by knowing which you shall be freed from what savours of evil.

We have pointed out how the initiative here passes on to the teacher Krishna now occupies the centre of the stage

The force of the word *tu* (indeed) almost implying "on the other hand," points at the special importance of this Chapter as intended by the author. Attention is further drawn to the unique nature of the teaching here by the expression *guhyatamam* (most secret) But the superficial reader is unlikely to see in this Chapter in which statement this great secret of secrets is lodged

The reference to *asuya* (usually translated cavilling or carping and given here as "mistrust") involves an attitude of disadoption, resulting in a lack of sympathetic understanding between teacher and pupil

The power to listen is as important as the ability to teach, especially where such profound secrets are involved The relation has to be strictly bipolar Mistrust and rivalry between the two have to be completely eliminated The importance of this guru-sishya relationship is not unfamiliar in other works such as the *Viveka Chūdamani* of Sankara. It is even held generally in Vedānta that no worthwhile teaching can come except through the mediation of a proper guru, and the recognition of a teacher who is pleased by the service rendered by a pupil is a desired condition, usually expressly indicated in all *samvadas* (philosophical discussions) of the same kind before any serious teaching begins

Here in this Chapter this particular type of recognition is *given to Arjuna as a disciple, for the first time* Expressions like *saumya* (pleasing one) and *vatsa* (child) are found elsewhere *in the Upanishads, which indicate the same mutual* recognition which may be said to be a form of *pratyabhijnana* (*counter recognition*)

The reference here to the absence of such a disadoption is *therefore an important prerequisite before the proper teaching* can begin

The *expression jnanam vijnanasahitam* (wisdom *together with* its specialized implications) would suggest in the first instance *that there is even in this Chapter detailed indications regard*ing the practice of spirituality As a matter of fact we do not *find any such practical directions at all, except perhaps what* is implied in verses 26 and 34

The *reference to wisdom coupled with specific knowledge* must therefore be understood to mean that here in this Chapter the pure and practical aspects of wisdom are unitively treated as if they were one Practice is not a department of spirituality outside the scope of pure wisdom The previous discussions have laid the foundation stone by stone and step by step for the justification of the stand taken here

The last vestige of duality which seemed to persist as between theory and practice in the previous Chapter where it recommended remember Me and fight (VIII, 7) and the double indication of ' utter Aum and remember Me ' (VIII, 13) are here transcended

The reference to *asubhat* (from evil, sin something in auspicious) comprises both evil and sin understood in the moral, religious or value sense This is a hearkening back to the starting position of the work as a whole because it was upon Arjuna s obsession with sin or evil that the discussion began and thus it is the central practical problem which should never be by passed, even in this central Chapter

The way of *moksha* (emancipation) and the way of wisdom are treated indifferently here *This is quite in keeping with* what has already been said in IV 36 where the raft of wisdom was *referred to as being able to carry one* beyond sin *In fact,* a position almost similar to this has once been covered in Chapter IV, where wisdom is given full primacy over all religious practices whatsoever including the highest forms of sacrifice, as in IV 33 This taken together with IV 32, almost

reaches the same height of the absolutist doctrine more definitely finalized in the present Chapter

[2] *rajavidya rajaguhyam*
pavitram idam uttamam
pratyakshavagamam dharmyam
susukham kartum avyayam

Royal science, crowning secret purificatory is this, superior, objectively verifiable, conforming to right living, very easy to live (and) subject to no decrease

The character of the teaching which excels, both as a public or scientific and open way of wisdom, as also one which holds the profoundest of secrets which belong to the esoterics of spirituality, is extolled further in this verse

The teaching becomes royal in the sense that a public road may be said to be royal, or belonging to the kingdom, and thus open to all who choose to walk on it It is not reserved for the chosen few This is made clear in verse 32

The secret referred to may be said to be indicated in verses 11 and 24 Here the epithet *raja* means ' crowning " and is not because of its public nature but in the unique value of the teaching

Pavitram (purifying) should be understood in the same sense as already indicated in the previous verse It is what clears away the dross of evil whether in the form of sin, action or ignorance

The term *pratyakshavagamam* (experimental) as understood in modern branches of knowledge, is a quality rarely claimed for teachings which belong to the metaphysical domain No laboratory experiment can be meant but in so far as the methods and results come within the purview of what could be observed in objective terms this epithet as applied to the teaching here can be justified An objective critical scientific treatment could be included under the term here

The word *dharmyam* (in accord with right living) is also important because the prevailing notion with regard to esoteric teaching is that it is removed from the norms of good life here understood in the human context As a public discipline on the other hand philosophy can err by going to the other extreme of setting up standards beyond the reach of the ordinary man

It is claimed here that the teaching of the Gita avoids both these extremes and that it is "easy of practice", while it remains *avyayam* (unexpended) This last epithet raises it to the category of the eternal once again

The fact that this way with such an open character does not yet detract from its superiority is implied in the word *uttamam* (superior)

[3] *asraddadhanah purusha*
dharmasya sya paramtapa
aprapya mam nivartante
mrityu samsara vartmani

Men without whole hearted faith affiliation to this way of right living, O Burner of Foes (Arjuna), not attaining to Me, return to the paths of mortality and *cyclic repetition of existence*

This verse begins the main section where the notion of the Absolute which Krishna represents is subjected to final revision and restatement He puts himself at the head of all Vedic and other divinities and his relation to creation is made as mysterious and paradoxical as befits the purest way of appraising *the Absolute*

Although permitting all forms of worship from the most childish *such as the offering of fruit and flowers to God,* he says that all those who do not understand him as the Absolute, fall Thus this Chapter speaks of a way of life which is referred to in this verse as *dharmasya 'sya* (of this way of right living)

When we consider that in its conclusion the Gita in xviii, 66 says that anything known as *dharma* (codified conduct) may be abandoned by the absolutist a reference here in the present verse to faith and conduct as if still tolerated, is only in view of the fact that the discussion is not yet completed Even here, however the word *dharma* (codified *conduct) should be under* stood to be used in the general sense, as when we say *upanishatsu dharmah* (way of life in keeping with the Upanishads) Likewise the faith here refers to the *ekantika bhakti* the one-pointed devotion to the Absolute

Arjuna is still a seeker and like a *brahmachari* (religious student) he may be said to begin to walk in the path of the Absolute At the end of this Chapter however we see that he has no need any more to think in terms of the way any more

In the word *asraddadhanah* (those who lack faith) it is suggested that a certain adoption of the new revalued teaching is an important necessary condition here One has to be free from all prejudices Thus there is the need for such insistence in terms of faith, though the goal is not strictly a religious one, but one which pertains to universal wisdom Faith here can only be understood as referring to wisdom

The subject of return and non return of the soul after death is alluded to again here in the term *nivartante* (return) because this is the pivotal consideration on which the subtle distinctions intended in this Chapter and in the Gita as an Upanishad may be said to revolve Referring forwards we have another allusion to this in verse 21, and we recall also that Chapter VIII ended in verse 26 on this very same theme The distinction of the Gita consists in its upholding of the non returning path which is the same as that of thorough going absolutism All other paths, it is suggested here, make one return to what is described in this verse as consisting of the way of mortality and cyclic repetition of existence to which all relativist spirituality must necessarily be subject The plural case emphasizes what has been said in II, 41

[4] *maya tatam idam sarvam*
jagad avyaktamurtina
matsthani sarvabhutani
na cha 'ham teshv avasthitah

By Me all this world is pervaded, My form unmanifested, all beings have existence in Me and I do not have existence in them

The unravelling of the mystery of the Absolute begins in this verse It is insisted here that the Absolute is without form The same vague or unmanifested nature of the Absolute is further emphasized in verse 11

Although thus the formless *Brahman* is given a central and most important position in the Gita teaching, a concession is made in XII, 5 in favour of persons who might find such pure teaching difficult of adoption in their own personal lives When we note this we find that the pure philosophical position of the central core of the work is deviated from in later Chapters, greater and greater concession being made to the workaday requirements of the ordinary man, until we become able to

distinguish in this present Chapter and in Chapter XVIII the various natural duties which belong to the four orders of society based on individual variations in type and vocation.

In a graded descending series in successive Chapters the work touches on more concrete aspects such as the three *gunas* (modalities of nature), higher and lower values implied in conduct, after recognizing the duality between *kshetra* (field) and *kshetrajna* (knower of the field). An awe inspiring picture of the Absolute conceived in terms of time or becoming leads to the notion even of a punishing god in certain of the later Chapters. The peak of the discussion being over in Chapters IX and X, there is need for the structural arch of the Gita to rest on real *terra firma* once again. If this general structure is kept in mind, we shall be able to see that, although doctrinally speaking, the Gita upholds the manifested Absolute, it progressively compromises its own teaching when it comes to a life that is to be lived in workaday terms.

The paradoxical wonder of the Absolute is therefore at its highest in the present Chapter. In the light of what we have said *it is but natural. Beings exist in the Absolute but the* converse is not true, and is here denied. Exactly what then is the relation between the Absolute and existence remains a wonder and a mystery. This mystery is further heightened in *the verses that follow*.

[5] *na cha matsthani bhutani*
pasya me yogam aisvaram
bhutabhrin na cha bhutastho
mama tma bhutabhavanah

And further, beings do not exist in Me, behold My status as a divine mystery; further, Myself remaining that urge behind beings, I bear them but do not exist in them either.

Manifested beings do not have existence in the Absolute either, although the relationship of ruler and ruled might be postulated between them. *Mamatma* (Self of the Absolute) seems to make the relation subtler still, as it is this Self which is stated here to be the vital urge behind the emanation of all beings.

What remains when all these vague indications are kept in mind? This is stated frankly in the verse itself to be a wonder

by the expression *paśya me yogam aiśvaram* (behold My divine mystery). Yoga here points at some mystery as in the phrase *yoga māyā* (the illusive effect of negative reality) employed in VII, 25.

We are reminded of Zeno's paradoxes here. The wonder remains, unsolved by any logic. When the meaning is subjected to final scrutiny it amounts to saying that Krishna as representing the Absolute has no *ahamkāra* (individual ego) as might be the case with ordinary human beings. If then, we ask why the personal pronoun is used by Krishna we are obliged to say that it is for purposes of conforming to literary requirements. It is thus that he attains the divine status of a wonder, by being an ego-less Self.

[6] *yathā 'kāsasthito nityam*
vāyuh sarvatrago mahān
tathā sarvāni bhūtāni
matsthānī 'ty upadhāraya

As the great (expanse of) air filling all space has its basis in pure extension, thus you should understand all existences as having their basis in Me.

By a familiar example this verse attempts to clarify the mystery. It takes two subtle phenomenal entities, the wind that blows everywhere filling all space, and the sky that contains it. The more general entity is included in the more particular one, though both come under what may be called the expansive or the great.

Between the air and the sky the difference is not one of degree but of kind. The Absolute similarly belongs to its own category, though resembling the principle of *mahat* (the great) of Sāmkhya (rationalist) doctrine. In fact the word *mahan* (great) used here in qualifying the air is reminiscent of the same subtle distinction. We would normally have expected the adjective to qualify the sky as the Absolute, but actually it is applied to air which though great is a more relativist entity. The notion of the Absolute in the Gita is thus equated to the notion of the highest Self when purified of all egotism, but it is not to be mixed up with the mere principle of *mahat* (the great) of the Sāmkhya system. It requires a revised epistemology which the Gita supplies here, bringing the abstractions of the Sāmkhya concept nearer to human

life-values, while still retaining its uncompromising Absolutist purity

[7] *sarvabhutani kaunteya*
prakritim yanti mamikam
kalpakshaye punas tani
kalpadau visrijamy aham

[8] *prakritim svam avashtabhya*
visrijami punah punah
bhutagramam imam kritsnam
avasam prakriter vasat

All beings, O Son of Kunti (Arjuna), pass into My nature at the end of a unit of cosmic duration (*kalpa*) and at the beginning of the same unit, I emanate them

By virtue of My nature, I emanate again and again the whole aggregates of beings, subject as they are to the necessary compulsion of nature

The cosmological process of emanation and withdrawal into the prime nature of the Absolute in a rhythmical manner, this time has *kalpa* (in Vedic computation a large unit of cosmic duration equal to 1000 *yugas* or to one day of Brahma) as its measure A similar alternating process as between the day and night of Brahma, consisting each of 1000 *yugas* (meaning a very long astronomical aeon aggregating according to experts, to 4 320 000 solar years and divided into various periods such as Satya Treta, Dvapara and Kali) was mentioned in viii 17 Although the picture here is apparently similar to the cosmological process described in the last Chapter, there are some striking differences to be noted

There it was conceived in terms of alternation between day and night or light and darkness Here the twin aspect is not given any importance although the beginning and end of a *kalpa* or day of Brahma are still envisaged The alternation is not between manifested and unmanifested reality but between reality in its prime state and its emanation as nature immanent and transcendent being treated as a whole

The Absolute itself thus comes to be viewed as capable of having two aspects one in which it is pure and another in

which it is viewed as if conditioned or coloured by factors that come under nature.

The relation between this nature and the pure Absolute itself is one which is similar to the relation between *māyā* (relativist appearance due to the principle of error) and *Brahman* (Absolute reality). Not infrequently, we find that *māyā* (appearance) is the same as *Brahman* (the Absolute), because on final analysis *māyā* as mere appearance has no existence outside the Absolute. These are subtleties of the Vedānta philosophy to be dealt with in their own place.

What we have to note here is that nature is hidden in the Absolute at certain times, while at other times it is not hidden but evident, or in other words that nature is virtually present in the Absolute at a given cosmological moment, while at other times it appears in a more actualized form.

The object of the author evidently is to present a cosmological picture which will still uphold the unique unity, aloofness and overall primacy of the Absolute. This cosmological allusion is justified in this Chapter only as a final concession to Arjuna whose background of spirituality whether belonging to the *devayāna* (divine path) or *pitriyāna* (way of the ancestors) in context, is still coloured. Even in the case of other seekers or aspirants to wisdom there is need, though perhaps in a modified form in keeping with their own particular backgrounds, for a realistic picture from this side of reality. Dry abstractions in the Buddhistic style are exactly what the Gita is reacting against. The difference in style and approach is the same as between Kant and Bergson.

Nature may be said to be an instrument of the pure Absolute principle. Instead of creating the various aggregates of beings which we see in the universe, it is this nature principle which has itself a status approximating to the Absolute itself and to which all agency in the act of particularized creation is attributable. The unconditioned Absolute itself is to be left out of the picture and the relation between this nature instrument and its operator is only something like that of a controlling magnet in certain electrical instruments. By its mere presence, somewhat like a catalytic agent, the Absolute helps nature indirectly and as it were from a distance, to fulfil its work with all the compulsive force of necessity which belongs to nature.

While nature is fatalistic, the Absolute belongs to the side of providence which is a witnessing presence with its own

subtle influence ever counteracting the fatality implied in nature

The subtle relationship here is as between sin and grace in theology (brought out for example in *The Imitation of Christ*) or as between an inexorable law and indeterminism in modern scientific theory It is referred to in *Taittiriya Upanishad* II, 6 Thus the import of the word *avasam* (helpless, *i e*, by force of necessity) should be understood imaginatively, or even with a certain intuition The necessary and the contingent sides of reality meet in unity in the purest notion of the Absolute which is here attempted to be presented

[9] *na cha mam tani karmani*
nibadhnanti dhanamjaya
udasinavad asinam
asaktam teshu karmasu

[10] *maya dhyakshena prakritih*
suyate sacharacharam
hetuna nena kaunteya
jagad viparivartate

Further, these works do not bind Me, O Winner of Wealth (Arjuna) for I am seated, seemingly indifferent, unattached to those actions

By Me presiding, nature gives birth to both the moveable and the immoveable entities, because of this, O Son of Kunti (Arjuna), this (moving) world revolves

These verses further underline the aloofness of the witnessing presence of the Absolute unaffected by actions or movements, as we have already explained

The expression *suyate* (gives birth to) suggests that the Absolute is the masculine principle The same idea is repeated more concretely in XIV 4 The agency, however, is less pronounced here, in keeping with the spirit of the Chapter

The expression *viparivartate* (revolving inversely) seems to suggest a double process of involution and dissolution when taken with *suyate* (bringing forth) But this being here hardly more than a suggestion can bear no further comment

[11] *avajānanti mām mūdhā*
mānushīm tanum āsritam
param bhāvam ajānanto
mama bhūtamahesvaram

[12] *moghāsā moghakarmāno*
moghajnānā vichetasah
rākshasīm āsurīm chai 'va
prakritim mohinīm sritāh

The foolish misunderstand Me because of My adopting the human form, ignorant as they are of My being that is beyond, as the Lord of all beings,

Of frustrated hope, of frustrated deeds, empty of wisdom, nondiscriminating, like malignant titans and demons, submitting themselves to a nature (of) confounding (values).

These verses state the position in regard to spiritual life which may be said to be the most important contribution of the Gita. While pandits are still discussing the relative merits of *saguna archana* (offering flowers to a deity with qualities) in relation to the meditation on *nirguna Brahman* (unqualified Absolute), here is an unequivocal statement at the very centre of the Gita which, although stated so clearly, still suffers at the hands of apologists in the name of image-worship and *ishta devata upāsana* (propitiation of a chosen deity).

Modern Hinduism, especially after the decadence of the more philosophic schools of thought, has connived at many forms of religious practice, some of them being but puerile forms of popular adoration, on a par perhaps with the kissing of the brass or plaster image of Jesus in Milan and elsewhere, and violating even sanitary principles.

Some people even think that if they shed tears before a photograph or picture it will bring them spiritual progress. No respectable scripture however, can be quoted in support of such practices. In fact in the *Bhāgavata* III, XXIX, 21, it is referred to as *archāvidambanam* (unnecessary or even deceitful display of worship). It must be remembered also that in the *Visvarūpa Darsana* (Vision of the Absolute in Universal Form) Chapter XI, 46, the Gita presents Arjuna as asking Krishna to show himself in the familiar form of Vishnu so that he could

worship him as a divine being known to him But we see in verse 51 of the same Chapter that this request is refused, and that it is the ordinary human form that Krishna prefers to assume, treating the request of Arjuna with scant respect as it were, or even ignoring it

The reference to the offering of flowers in the present Chapter (verse 26) is often thought by many as supporting the usual form of worship through offerings familiar to the Indian scene But even there no allusion is made to an image, and moreover the reference is more permissive than mandatory in character

Even puerile forms of worship resorted to with motives that are pure are permitted a place in the scheme of worship in the Gita, but positive injunction to do *puja* (ritualist action) as a stepping stone to reach the Absolute, as some people put it is nowhere supported, even in Indian scriptures In fact the contrary is stressed in the Gita in places such as iv 33 Even in the Puranas (legends) Ravana's *puja* (ritual) full of elaborations and many objects is spoken of disparagingly

But *puja* (ritual) through *mantra* (mystical utterances) and *japa* (repetitions of formulae) has always been preferred to mere *upasana* (propitiatory worship through vows) These latter, moreover, have been referred to as inferior in the Upanishads (*e g* *Kena Upanishad* i 4, 5)

The Gita being a *yoga sastra* (textbook on unitive under standing) dealing with the science of the Absolute, continues the rational philosophic tradition of India without giving room for any heterodoxy Such being its essential nature it is but natural to expect that it would not uphold puerile or lazy forms of worship The strong note here thus becomes levelled against people who would misunderstand the true nature of the Absolute The protest here is in the same spirit as in xviii 22, as when a man gives importance to a particular object as against its universal import as a principle Quota tions from the Gita itself which suggest the same perversity among men can be multiplied (*e g* xviii 32)

One thing however is clear the denunciation of this type of perversity is stated in most emphatic terms here as we see from the term *mudhah* (fools) and other expressions no less denunciatory by which the greater part of verse 12 is filled Equally strong denunciation is shown in vii 25 where the objection is of the same kind though not stated so precisely or finally

All static or fixed notions of the Absolute should be considered out of place in the strict light of Vedānta. A static view, even when it is glorified by myth and symbol, only becomes worse than the commonsense reality of the Absolute considered as a good, great or loveable man in the ordinary sense. The misunderstanding referred to here of the Absolute covers all anthropomorphic forms and notions possible, from the most simple to the most elaborate. Perhaps the most excusable of them all is when a good man is extolled as having mystical attributes as in the Arthurian legends, or in the case of hero-worship, where a Rāmā or a Krishna begin to represent the Absolute. Siva is said to be a simple hunter who attained the status of the Absolute as the Tāndava-Mūrti (divine dancing form). However exalted or excusable all these might be, they fall short of the ideal held up to view in this Chapter which is given to the wisdom-vision alone, and for which the Gita stands.

The *param bhāva* (being that is beyond), *i.e.*, in the great Unmanifest referred to before, gives status of overlordship over the visible world to the Absolute intended here.

Verse 12 continues the denunciation in measured and graded language by a series of deliberately thought-out epithets which seem to follow a tacit epistemological framework. The same framework can be discerned in XVIII, 14, where the various factors are enumerated but in reverse order.

The term *āsā* (expectation) refers to the future and is a vague spiritual factor like hope in Christian theology. The next epithet refers to *karma* (action) which is more ontological in character. Finally there is *āsurī* (demonic) which may be said to be a quality of earth, earthy.

Moha (confusing) really refers to the confounding of values resulting from lazy attitudes or attachment to sense-objects. The true contemplative is the one whose intelligence can penetrate reality without distortion. Others follow the track of wrong interests at every level and thus their life becomes full of frustration.

The words *āsura* (demon) and *rākshasa* (malignant titan) may be understood to refer to people of low interests or crude values based on sense-pleasures or mere particularized objectivity. The word *āsura* (demon) is employed in a similar sense in VII, 15 and in Chapter XVI is treated more exhaustively in contrast with the *devas* (bright deities), *i.e.*, those who are capable of appreciating higher values.

[13] *mahatmanas tu mam partha*
daivim prakritim asritah
bhajanty ananya manaso
jnatva bhutadim avyayam

But those of Great Self O Partha (Arjuna) affiliated to My divine nature adore with mind exclusive of all extraneous interests having known Me as the unexpended primal Source of all beings

This verse states the converse position Those who are of a pure disposition however are here called *mahatmas* (of great Self) as contrasted with the lower types of the last two verses

We should notice that the affiliation to the two contrasted cases belong as it were to opposite poles The affiliation of the former two classes is through the senses to values that are particular and objective while in the case of those who are called of Great Self here it is to the *bhutadi* (primal Source of beings) This Source may be said to be a higher value or to represent universal values

The reference to *ananya manasah* (mind strictly exclusive of all extraneous interests) again stresses the condition of bipolarity in relation to the Absolute as it should be understood in the Gita

[14] *satatam kirtayanto mam*
yatantas cha dridhavratah
namasyantas cha mam bhaktya
nityayukta upasate

[15] *jnanayajnena cha py anye*
yajanto mam upasate
ekatvena prithaktvena
bahudha visvato mukham

Always singing praises of Me ever striving firm in vows and saluting Me devotedly they are ever united in worshipful attendance

Others also sacrificing with the wisdom sacrifice unitively dualistically as also in many ways facing universally everywhere worshipfully attend on Me.

These two verses serve the purpose of linking together orthodox religious trends with heterodox rational trends, both of which have existed side by side on the Indian soil.

Verse 14 alludes to vows and disciplines or methods of worship common in India under the caption of yoga as understood in the Gita, as indicated by the phrase *nityayuktā* (ever-united).

In so far as these disciplines or practices, however commonplace or ordinary, have by yogic affiliation the Absolute as their object, they become raised to a freshly revised status, and are therefore included for respectable mention and recognition here. Dialectical revaluation which is the method of the Gita, as of every form of religious progress in the course of history, is sufficiently evident here. There is no abrupt breaking away from whatever has been in vogue. There is fulfilment without destruction, and as Moses was revalued by Jesus, a subtle dialectical method is here also applied.

The expression *kīrtayantah* (singing praises), the references to *vratāh* (vows), to *namasyantah* (salutary worship) and to *upāsana* (worshipful attendance), all represent popular forms of practice found in religious life, especially where no heterodoxy is involved.

Rational schools however, tend to be heterodox because they are philosophical. The varieties in such a context are also enumerated in verse 15.

Although there is no direct reference here to yoga, as a general heading for the varieties mentioned in verse 15, there is the expression *jnānayajna* (sacrifice of wisdom) which can have meaning only as understood in IV, 33 and in XVIII, 70, as an expression peculiar to the Gita as a textbook on yoga.

Yajna (sacrifice) and *upāsana* (worshipful attendance) are also introduced even in the philosophical context. Worship and philosophy, at least in the Gita, are not advocated in that pronounced contrasted manner known in the West. Such expressions as these mentioned in a philosophical context help to make the arrows point both ways as it were, reconciling religion and philosophy.

The different schools of philosophy are brought under three headings here: those that speak monistically; those that admit a dual principle, whether in the form of a worshipper and a worshipped or between spirit and nature, etc.; and those comprising perhaps the pantheists, who take the whole universe as consisting of the presence of God.

This third category might include even the pluralists, nominalists or conceptualists, and Leibnizian monadists need not be excluded from this group

Whatever the variety of philosophy, they are brought here together as being affiliated to the notion of the Absolute one way or the other They all hold the Absolute dear, and thus belong to the one grand category which the Gita wants to recognize in a very catholic spirit

The Gita may be said to refer to them elsewhere, *e g*, to those of unitive outlook or monists in II, 41, to dualistic philosophers in VIII, 26, and to universal pantheists in Chapter XI Without reference to schools of philosophy we can interpret these three classes as those who think unitively, those who accept the dual principle for methodological purposes, and those who are able to see unity in multiplicity

The object here is merely to bring all appreciation of the Absolute under one comprehensive or universal vision

Such a vision, however, is not to be looked upon as being tainted by any kind of solipsism syncretism or eclecticism It is when it is viewed in the light of pure epistemology that the necessity for such a vision emerges as a culminating or crowning finality If however to this finalized epistemological vision is added a notion of supreme values, there emerges that *complete idea of the Absolute to which the Gita is never tired* of referring as the greatest of secrets

The Absolute is not any particular value as such, but the principle which runs through all correlating and co-ordinating all of them into one whole Such is the suggestion contained in VII 7

Thus it is a grand epistemological value factor which gives meaning to truth or reality as most comprehensively conceived No system nor any discipline falls outside the scope of such an Absolute and all religious or philosophical systems are but cross sections of its global entirety which is beyond words

[16] *aham kratur aham yajnah*
s adha ham aham aushadha n
mantro ham aham eva jyam
aham agnir aham hutam

I the ritual action I the sacrifice, I the ancestral oblation, I the potent medicinal herb I the holy

formula, I also the melted butter, I the fire, I the offering

The next section of four verses attempts to mark out the limits and the amplitude within which this all-comprehensive value called the Absolute swings Different departments in religion, or holy values, are all enumerated to enhance the wonder and the numinous nature of such a notion

No major type of spirituality is omitted If some religions call God the Father, or some others stress the Motherhood principle, in terms of supreme value they have to be looked upon as the same

Moreover we notice from a scrutiny of the instances given that ends and means are treated indifferently, as we have seen in IV, 24

Ritualism, religion, theology and cosmology are the various approaches covered here. Verse 19 marks the ultimate limit of such a comprehensive vision when it sums up by saying that the Absolute is both being and non-being The position is reminiscent of the last section of the *Mandukya Upanishad*

In verse 16 in particular, the attempt is made to reconcile ends and means, the path and the goal

[17] *pita 'ham asya jagato*
mata dhata pitamahah
vedyam pavitram aumkara
rik sama yajur eva cha

I the Father of this world, the Mother, the Supporter and the Grandsire (ancestor), the Holy One who is to be known, the Purifier, the syllable Aum, as also the (Vedas) called Rik, Sāma and Yajus

This verse attempts to reconcile different theological aspects of divinity, including the word *Logos* as *Aum* as well as scripture itself which is considered holy. They all represent theological values in one context or another

[18] *gatir bharta prabhuh sakshi*
nivasah saranam suhrit
prabhavah pralayah sthanam
nidhanam bijam avyayam

[I am] the Goal, the Supporter, the Lord, the Witness, the Abode, the Refuge, the Friend, the Becoming, the Dissolution, and Ground of Being, ontological Basis, and never expended Seed

A similar synthesis is effected between ontological or teleological aspects of the Absolute, whether conceived as the Overlord or merely as a Witness Aspects of Self surrender are treated on a par with reality conceived in terms of a supreme value as suggested by the term *nidhanam* (treasure house) which could also be understood as the simple ontological basis of reality

No purpose would be served by going into the various implications of these epithets They cover every form of possible value in the contemplative context

[19] *tapamy aham aham varsham*
nigrihnamy utsrijami cha
amritam chai va mrityus cha
sad asach cha ham arjuna

I radiate heat (and) I rain, I withhold and I send forth, I am immortality and death, as also being and non being, O Arjuna

This last verse of the section sums up in more orthodox fashion how the Absolute is the meeting place of opposites Cool rain and parching heat as phenomenal factors that are held together unitively is the first notion of the Absolute presented here Similarly holding back and letting go represents another pair in the phenomenal world which similarly neutralize each other in the Absolute The next pair immortality and death, are also juxtaposed and cancelled out in the neutrality of the Absolute, and finally being and non being, which pair is the greatest and most favourite of all the para doxes in the Vedanta, is mentioned This last pair treated as the two opposites belongs to the Unmanifest which is the basis of both, as stated in viii, 20

[20] *traividya mam somapah putapapa*
yajnair ishtva svargatim prarthayante
te punyam asadya surendralokam
asnanti divyan divi devabhogan

[21] *te tam bhuktvā svargalokam viśālam*
kshīṇe puṇye martyalokam viśanti
evam trayīdharmam anuprapannā
gatāgatam kāmakāmā labhante

Knowers of the three (Vedas), soma-drinkers, purified from sin, worshipping by sacrifices, pray of Me the way to heaven; they, attaining the holy world of Indra (Lord of Gods) enjoy divine feasts in heaven

They, having enjoyed that expansive heaven-world, then on their merit exhausted, they enter the world of mortality, thus conforming to the righteous notions implied in the three (Vedas), desiring desirable objects they obtain values which come and go.

These two verses refer to Vedic forms of relativist worship which it is the main task of the Gita to consider as its anterior position to be revalued and restated in keeping with its own absolutist way.

In doing so, however, no wholesale condemnation is resorted to. On the other hand there is praise, giving full credit to whatever good such relativist worship might imply. The picture presented here of souls that rise to the expansive heaven of Indra, and after enjoying the feasts there, descend once again when their store of merit is exhausted, is not however without a touch of sarcasm.

This is all too evident in expressions like *asnanti divyān divi devabhogām* (eating in heaven of the divine feasts of the deities) and *svargalokam viśālam* (expansive heaven) and in the anticlimax implied in *gatāgatam* (going and coming). These flavour all too clearly of gentle sarcasm as usual in many parts of the Upanishads themselves where Vedic chanters have even been compared to croaking frogs.

The use of special metre in these verses, however, indicates the opposite. There is exaltation and joy implied. The lower *dharma* (right behaviour) of the Vedas is not discarded in favour of the higher *dharma* of the Upanishads, or the latter considered at the expense of the former. Both are accepted in the spirit of the same song, which knows no duality anywhere. The position is not different from that of Yājnavalkhya in the *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad* (III, 1, 2) when he accepts the cows with gold tied to their horns, and then takes up the challenge

regarding the true nature of wisdom That is why we find the sublime metre present together with the touch of sarcasm fitted into the song The poetic result is similar to that found in Dante and Milton and one forgets the doctrine in the sheer musical delight of the sublime song

Notice here in verse 20 that although the Vedic worshippers happen to pray to the same Absolute, their prayer is not for wisdom but for enjoyment This makes all the difference in principle and it is not surprising in the light of what is to follow in verse 23 where it is conceded that even the wor shippers of other deities than what is represented by Krishna who is the Absolute, are in reality recognized as worshipping the Absolute in principle though wrongly

[22] *ananyas chintayanto mam*
ye janah paryupasate
tesham nityabhiyuktanam
yogakshemam vahamy aham

Those persons who meditating on Me to the exclu sion of all else worship Me, to those ever established unitively I bring that solace of the unitive way of yoga

This verse is often quoted by pious admirers of the Gita teaching who attach importance to the security that they imagine as suggested here on the part of a conventional God to the devotee But more than this well being taken in the usual sense there is a well being implied here which is of the nature of Self realization which is generally overcovered by their piety and anxiety for security

It is beyond question that the *yogakshema* (well being or happiness through unitive understanding) referred to here cannot be something like welfare or security in the ordinary individual or collective sense although such an implication need not be purposely ruled out from its meaning When we remember that yoga is what the Gita preaches throughout *yogakshema* (the happiness resulting from unitive understand ing) must mean something that is different from the transitory happiness gained by Vedic worshippers which was depicted in the preceding verses

In the first place it must connote lasting happiness, and secondly it must have something to do with affiliation of the

yogi to the Absolute, in a manner which excludes all change, relapse or return from a state of happiness.

That such is the sense intended is further indicated by the repetition here of the same conditions which we have noticed already, such as *ananyāchinta* (meditation to the exclusion of all else) and *nityāyukta* (ever-united) which are concomitants of the bipolar relation which we have understood to be the essential feature of the type of self-surrender recommended throughout the Gita.

It is not in terms of heaven or enjoyment that the yogi gains advantage, but in terms of Self-knowledge and unitive wisdom which brings everlasting joy knowing no fluctuations.

[23] *ye 'py anyadevatā bhaktā*
yajante sraddhayā 'nvitāh
te 'pi mām eva kaunteya
yajanty avidhipūrvakam

Even those who, devoted to other gods, worship them with faith, they in fact worship Myself, O Son of Kunti (Arjuna), though not conforming to orthodox rules.

This verse can be considered as complementary to what has been said in verse 20, where the prayer is wrong but the affiliation is right. Here, conversely the prayer is full of faith but the affiliation is wrong.

Whether it is one way or the other, the results accrue. The faith-element referred to here contains implicitly a spiritual directive which benefits the aspirant. The subject has been covered before in VII, 20 and 21. It was individual desire which deflected the devotee towards other gods there, and faith was out of the question. The element of faith however, which was lacking in the case of the worshippers in VII, 20, was what made them go astray. But when this element of faith, mentioned in VII, 21, was introduced, the relation became straightened again and tended to become firmer day by day.

In the present verse the condition of faith is fulfilled, but as is stated in the next verse, the danger of blind faith without knowledge is brought out. Again as between sin and grace there is a subtle balance between faith and wisdom, of which the latter is a regulating factor in maintaining the relationship soundly and correctly.

The catholicity of the Gita as an open way of life is unquestionable according to the present verse, as it throws open the door of recognition even to those who do not worship Krishna himself, but who happen to have heterodox faith in other gods No more generous attitude could be expected or imagined, and the Gita teaching is therefore one conceived in terms of universal hope for all humanity People have only to understand correctly the laws implied in the science of the Absolute contained in the Upanishads Thus the Gita becomes a *sastra* (textbook) of wisdom, and not a closed religion of the Hindus, the Bhagavatas (worshippers of Krishna) or anybody else It is not " theism ' as Professor Edgerton and others would have us believe

[24] *aham hi sarvayajnanam*
bhokta cha prabhur eva cha
na tu mam abhijananti
tattvena 'tas chyavanti te

I am indeed the Enjoyer, as also the Lord of all sacrifices, but they fall indeed who do not understand Me according to first principles

The necessity for affiliation to the Absolute is continued here, this time through wisdom and not through faith Blind faith can go off the mark, though in principle it need not necessarily do so

Thus between all these cross-clauses of the various verses there is implied a variety of Cartesian occasionalism This is similar to the cross-clauses in the Christian gospel of St. Matthew regarding those who are with or against Jesus Christ. There is a subtle bipolar agreement here between the worshipper and the Absolute, which succeeds or fails according as the faith is of the right quality or the wisdom of the right kind.

In this verse it is the possibility of the wisdom not being finalized which results in the fall mentioned

True faith which may have even circumscribed knowledge gives the same result as when knowledge is finalized though the faith may be feeble It is the purity of the bipolarity which is established between the individual and the Absolute which counts The relative strength of either faith or wisdom as long as it does not interfere with this bipolarity produces the same resultant

Parental affection depends upon filial loyalty and *vice versa* Such is the dialectical relation between faith and wisdom here Narayana Guru states the same principle very clearly in *Ātmopadesha Satakam* (verse 60)

> "Should knowledge even be brought within the domain of egoism, and the supreme import of what has been said be forgotten, (even thus) misconstrued, like the Principle supreme itself, such knowledge can never become alien to the knowing Self

Here by saying that Krishna as the Absolute is the enjoyer of all sacrifices it is merely intended to explain in the ritualistic language of the Vedas, that at one pole of the bipolar situation there is the Absolute, while at the other there is the sacrificer or aspirant Whatever the form of the sacrifice, a relation between the sacrificer and the Absolute depends on having a right notion of the Absolute Whether this notion is of an academic perfection or not, it has to be a correct one as far as it goes, here called *tattvena* (in accordance with first principles)

Such a relation, when correctly established succeeds, whereas all other relations fail The failure due to wrong faith does not arise That would be like saying that a mother does not love her child while the child loves the mother The latter can fail but the former never does Thus with true faith, when it is there the question of its failure does not arise A wrong notion of the Absolute, however, would be a definite draw back Of the two factors involved, the right notion of the Absolute being more directly within the control of the individual, should be consciously cultivated Though faith is an equally important or even a more important factor, blind faith can still have dangers which should be avoided The fall referred to in this verse at least indicates that such a danger is possible

[25] *yanti devavrata devan*
pitrin yanti pitrivratah
bhutani yanti bhutejya
yanti madyajino 'pi mam

Votaries of the divinities go to the divinities, votaries of the ancestors go to the ancestors, sacrificers to

elemental existences go to elemental existences, and so too My worshippers attain to Me

The need for right affiliation with the Absolute is again stressed If a person has ancestral values in mind, which do not strictly pertain to the Absolute, and if he still thinks that he is pious in the correct sense, he will miss reaching the highest that is implied in the Gita teaching The result of wrong affiliation is temporary, as stated in VII, 23 Three kinds of such wrong affiliation are referred to here

[26] *pattram pushpam phalam toyam*
yo me bhaktya prayachchhati
tad aham bhaktyupahritam
asnami prayatatmanah

He who offers to Me with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water, that do I accept as being offered with devotion by one who makes the (right) effort

The converse case of a man of faith is the basis of this oft quoted verse The offering of a flower or a leaf is a symbolic act sufficiently familiar in India Even this simple or almost puerile form of propitiatory offering is not rejected in the Gita In a revalued or permissive form it is given due recognition with one important proviso, as contained in the expression *me* (to Me) *bhaktya* (with devotion) The devotee must be sure that he is offering it to the highest Absolute and secondly he must have that *bhakti* (devotion) of the right quality or intensity Given these two conditions even this simple worship gains the same status as the fullest philosophical affiliation of a wise man to the Absolute

The reference to *prayatatmanah* (of one who makes the right effort) is to the intention implied in the worshipper which is of determining importance as is the case with an accused in a court of law Although the objects offered are trivial, if the qualification of the worshipper is in accord with the requirements as understood here, the worship is said to be right

[27] *yat karoshi yad asnasi*
yaj juhoshi dadasi yat
yat tapasyasi kaunteya
tat kurushva madarpanam

What you do, what you eat, what you offer, what you give, what austerity you practise, O Son of Kunti (Arjuna), let that be done as an offering to Me.

The ordinary necessary occupations in a man's life should not hinder or enter into conflict with the way of wisdom. The implications of the direction given to Arjuna in VIII, 27 to be a yogi at all times, which was covered at the instinctive functional level in V, 8 and 9, is further re-examined here in terms of more conscious activities in which a man might be engaged, especially in his religious or spiritual life.

As recommended in V, 8 and 9, where it is a denial of action, here the same yoga consists of surrendering all actions to the Absolute. In other words the personal motive of the action is minimized and the general and universal consciousness of the Absolute which may be spoken of as the general good at all times, as a supreme or universal value is here kept in mind.

The egotistic edge attached to actions is thus rubbed off and it is in this sense that surrender to the Absolute should be understood. The moral sense which is present as a categorical imperative in each person thus finds expression in a way of life which implies global generosity referring to all beings and for all time.

Note that *dadāsi yat* (what one gives) included among the other references, which are of a religious character and not philanthropic or altruistic, implies open goodness to all and a universal generosity rather than mere interest in personal emancipation. In such a surrender intended here, therefore, the idea of generosity and religious spirituality are treated together without difference.

Reference also to austerity which belongs neither to religion nor ethics is likewise not omitted.

Read side by side with verse 34 with which this Chapter closes, where allusion is also made to different styles of worship or spirituality, it is clear to us what this Chapter aims at accomplishing before it closes. It is a rounding-up of all forms of anterior spiritual trends in India under one all-presiding notion of the Absolute whether understood as a value or merely epistemologically.

The sense of value and wisdom are both brought together and the path merges with the goal, as we shall presently see

more clearly. Salvation is not something for which we wait at the end of meritorious conduct, but the conduct itself when surrendered to the Absolute is virtually a form of emancipation

In this cancelling-out of ends and means, the path and the goal, of the meritorious actions and the resultant emancipation, consists the secret of the yoga as presented in the Gita

The force of *kurushva* (do thou) in this context should be taken to be more permissive than mandatory. Such a direction has to be understood the same way as when we read a signboard which might read "walk on the pavement" which permits people who want to walk on the road, and does not apply to others such as those who might be going in a car, etc

[28] *subhāsubha phalair evam*
mokshyase karma bandhanaih
samnyāsayoga yuktātmā
vimukto mam upaishyasi

Thus you will be liberated from the bonds of action, whether its results are good or evil. With Self affiliated to unitive Self-denial, as one thus emancipated you will attain to Me

Hitherto it was *asubha* (evil or sin) which was referred to as something to be avoided It would be normal in the usual ethical or religious context to find a scripture recommending the avoidance of evil and the gaining of merit or good. But here in this central Chapter, as also in the earlier II, 57, and in one of the further Chapters, XII, 17, we find allusion indifferently to good and evil, both to be transcended alike. This is exactly what distinguishes the Gita and puts it on a par with the Upanishads Such unitive treatment is quite common as already stated

The Gita is therefore more of a philosophic treatise than a religious classic, especially if this feature to which we have just now referred is read with the final injunction in XVIII, 66, where all religious duties are to be discarded

Those who think that the Gita represents a closed scripture of the followers of the Bhāgavata cult or Vasudeva religion, which is said to have flourished in India about 100 B.C. will not find much support in this and other passages. Although

The phrase *samyag vyavasitah* (properly settled determination) implies that the proper determination takes into its purview some idea, however vague, of the Absolute to which the person is affiliated Thus the determination contains the seed of wisdom which is the saving factor. Further that it is the Absolute which is intended here is brought out by the pronoun *mam* (Me)

The theoretical principle here involved is the same as in the case where a number of passengers form a queue to buy a ticket to a certain destination As passengers they all have an equal status, irrespective of the ordinal position they have in the queue

The expression *mantavyah* (should be accounted) is because in principle there is no difference between the person here in status and anybody else, however advanced he might be in good conduct Moreover social conduct has no direct bearing in the context of contemplation, to which the Gita properly belongs, as had been made clear by Bergson in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*

[31] *kshipram bhavati dharmatma*
sasvachchhantim nigachchhati
kaunteya pratijanihi
na me bhaktah pranasyati

Instantaneously he becomes established in his own right nature and enters into eternal peace Believe Me in all confidence, O Son of Kunti (Arjuna), that one affiliated to Me with fidelity knows no destruction

This verse confirms the same principle, with the additional guarantee that the devotee in this sense never perishes When we speak of "life everlasting" in the context of contemplation, its own negative corollary or counterpart should be understood to be 'mortality", or being caught in the world of relativism The Gita says in IV, 40, that the man of doubt or conflict perishes. Being saved and perishing should be understood in contemplation as belonging to the idiom and language peculiar to contemplative metaphysics and not in the actual sense The true contemplative who fulfils the conditions implied in the previous verse enjoys what is called eternal life or life in the eternal now That in short, is what

s meant here, by the transformation of an evildoer into a good man, mentioned as being instantaneous or speedy as implied in the term *kshipram*

The word *dharmātmā* simply refers to one who is his own natural and correct inclination which can never be bad. Rousseau's doctrine of nature being good is implied here.

Even values such as eternal peace, which are spoken of as the supreme goal of all spiritual life, come within the reach of the evildoer referred to here, when he fulfils the apparently requisite conditions Then there is the confident and fully reassuring promise solemnly made in a tone of intimacy to Arjuna, stating that the true contemplative lives a life which is eternal

[32] *mam hi partha vyapasritya*
ye 'pi syuh papayonayah
striyo vaisyas tatha sudras
te 'pi yanti param gatim

They too who resort to Me for refuge, O Pārtha (Arjuna), whoever they might be, (whether) women, workers (*sūdras*) as well as farmer merchants (*vaisyas*), (all) of sinful origin, they too attain to the supreme goal

This verse abolishes one of the darkest blemishes that have stained the spirituality of India through the ages In extolling as superior certain patterns of human virtues or conduct, and decrying others as low or inferior, there crept into the long history of Indian spirituality a stratifying and petrifying influence by which the whole of society was divided into watertight compartments known as castes

India being a country which gave primacy to spiritual values, this compartmentalization became accentuated to such an extent that to the common man these divisions became more real than the divisions which exist among different species of animals

The idea of caste was not confined only to the four castes in the popular mind In fact the fissiparous tendency which is at the root of caste is an evil found in human nature itself anywhere in the world The extreme harshness of attitude which exists even today between the Negro and the white man is only one example This tendency always helps the

such an affiliation is not to be ruled out, the conformity of the teachings of the Gita with the philosophical outlook of the Upanishads is not the least compromised thereby. In the light of the passages just cited, this fact is sufficiently clear.

The compound word *samnyāsayogayuktatmā* (Self affiliated to unitive self-denial) need not necessarily refer to a *samnyāsi* (renouncer) known to us in the religious institutional life of India The notion of *samnyāsa* (renunciation) itself will be subjected to a great deal of revision in Chapter XVIII. Moreover it is *samnyāsayoga* (renunciation unitively understood) and not mere renunciation which is referred to here. The difference it makes to the meaning is quite important to note. It is the same as between mere *karma* (action) and *karma yoga* (action unitively understood) The latter is action subjected to the dialectical revaluation implied in yoga. Similarly the term *samnyasayoga* is plain renunciation as understood before the time of the Gita, also subjected to dialectical revaluation. It thus comes to represent a way of life which involves action with a certain amount of detachment. The nature of that detachment is the same as the surrender to the Absolute referred to in the previous verse

By being thus adjusted in the light of yoga, the *samnyāsi* (renouncer) becomes *vimuktah* (emancipated) and attains the highest, *i e*, becomes freed from the bondage of action

[29] *samo 'ham sarvabhuteshu*
na me dveshyo 'sti na priyah
ye bhajanti tu mām bhaktya
mayi te teshu chā 'py aham

I (regard) all beings equally. To Me there is none hateful or dear. They however who worship with devotion, they are in Me and I too am in them.

From the side of the Absolute, the implications of the previous verse are here reiterated. In most other passages at the beginning and end of the Gita we find that Krishna likes or dislikes, approves or disapproves of certain static points or attributes Here the point of neutrality is stressed Equality of opposites is the key-word here He considers everybody equal, and the question of cruel punishment, as implied in XVI, 19 and 20, does not arise Nor is there that asymmetry between God and creation indicated in the earlier Chapters, in which

God is not in creation, but creation is in God (VII, 12). The distinction as between the instrument and the operator is not crudely pronounced as in XVIII, 61, where actualities are again faced

This neutral theoretical position of the Absolute has therefore its right place at the centre of the work. The familiar expression of *priya* (dear) as applied to a devotee or disciple, with a certain amount of partiality implied in it, is altogether absent here. The relation is therefore pure and sublime. Whether a devotee lives in God or God lives in the devotee, the resultant being the same, the perfect unity of worshipper and worshipped being here, the question of difference does not arise

[30] *api chet suduráchāro*
bhajate mam ananyabhak
sadhur eva sa mantavyah
samyag vyavasito hi sah

Even if one of very evil actions should worship Me with a devotion exclusive of all else, he should be accounted to be good all the same merely by the fact that he has a properly settled determination

Underlying the four verses beginning here there is the same principle which in its implication makes the Gita one of the most open and generous of scriptures Not only is the door open to all grades in society, irrespective of caste or religious merit, but also there is full hope even to a person who is branded specifically as a *suduráchārah* (one of very evil actions)

The sinner against whom the doors of heaven are shut, which is a favourite theological formula found in most religious books, is given not only all the hope but even a status of equality with any other spiritual seeker, if only his affiliation contains the least element of absolutism The spark thus kindled is expected to burn backwards and consume all dross, as stated in IV, 37 The slightest kindling of the fire of wisdom is enough, and everything else is automatically accomplished.

The expression *ananyabhak* (devotion exclusive of all else) secures the same condition of bipolarity for the speedy emancipation of the person concerned as more clearly stated in the next verse.

formation of a hierarchy of groups, often very numerous, and based on no first principles at all, but merely upon prejudices

On the Indian soil the same phenomenon was repeated, but the experience of the Indian people in this matter made them codify and state clearly from time to time the principles involved in such a division The codes of Manu and Yājnavalkhya and others which were written comparatively early in the history of the Indian people after the penetration of the Aryans into the amorphous matrix of the original Indian people, were conceived, so to say, on a war footing, and the numerous castes which necessarily existed, based on racial and political considerations, were reduced to four main divisions in such codes

We have explained elsewhere how these four divisions gained their gradation on the principle of necessity to which the natural sections of society were subjected

The *sūdra* or the proletarian or worker was one whose life was most deeply involved in necessity, while the *brāhmana* or scholar was the leader of the wisdom-dialectics and was the least involved

These four divisions, conceived on principles which were seemingly fluid, had a certain rigidity and hereditary fixity when understood in the days of warfare between Aryan invaders and the original inhabitants It was a Hitlerian justice that the codes tacitly accepted as their basis As a result, it was the prevailing belief at the time of the Gita that women (who probably belonged mostly to the side that was conquered), *sudras* (workers) and *vaisyas* (agriculturists and merchants) could not aspire for emancipation in the same sense as it applied to the conquering party consisting of the *brahmanas* (scholars and priests) and their allies among the conquered who were called *kshattriyas* (warriors and tribal kings)

This verse breaks this hardened tradition with one revolutionary sweep as it were, the full significance of which may perhaps be lost to the modern reader, more especially of the West

On the Indian soil, however, the same prejudices have persisted down to our own times and have taken the most cruel forms in social life It was given to people like Mahatma Gandhi to face it frontally though only to drive it underground Though the winds of modernism seem to take away

the poignancy of the injustice as seen from the public angle *much of it still* persists under the visible level in spite of such verses as the present in the Gita which boldly throws open the doors of the highest form of spiritual life without distinction

The singling out of the three, the woman the worker and the peasant trader, and reference to them as being born of sin must be *understood in the light of the prevailing language* of the time, and not as containing the opinion of the author of the Gita

It is as when a group of people who had to have tickets to enter a certain place were notified that they could enter now without tickets at all We cannot therefore charge the Gita itself of making any discrimination between the groups mentioned in this verse and those to be mentioned in the next Such a separate reference to the two groups was factually and incidentally necessary at the time the Gita was written

There are superficial pandits who see in the expression *papayonayah* (those born out of a womb of sin) a tacit acceptance of hereditary caste discrimination in the Gita. They are as mistaken as those who object to the statement in this verse as containing an express affront degrading to all those who are not *brahmanas* (scholars) or *kshattriyas* (warriors) But one is compelled *to refer to facts even in abolishing a long standing* injustice and such references should neither hurt nor be a matter of elation to any interested party

At the time of the penetration of the Aryans into India, the discussion of caste had to be on a regular militant basis Even at the time of the writing of the Gita it had still to have *strong colouration reminiscent of the original war footing* In modern times even the reference to the castes and more especially the reference to those of sinful origin is repugnant and unnecessary The brahmin and the pariah belong to a traditional dialectical school of wisdom whose frontiers have long been abolished Modern wisdom is to be conceived only on a universal worldwide or global basis

What this verse does is to really guarantee fully the perfect open nature of the way of life of the Gita

[33] *kim punar brahmanah punya*
bhakta rajarshayas tatha
anityam asukham lokam
imam prapya bhajasva mam

How much more then the pure brāhmanas as also the devoted royal sages. Having reached this transient joyless world do you worship Me.

The first two castes are bracketted together under those who are pure, holy or devout. The *brāhmanas*, as Vedic scholars, are honoured wherever they go, and thus enjoy a certain freedom. The *kshattriyas* (warriors) being rulers have power in their hands which is capable of creating for them a certain amount of freedom, though mostly limited in their own domain, unless they are *rishis* (seers or sages) at the same time. It is the latter type to whom pointed allusion is made when treated together with the *brāhmanas*.

When we remember that some of the important Upanishads are to be traced to *kshattriyas* (warriors and kings) rather than to brahmins, the superiority here attributed to these two classes is understandable.

Here again the word *punyā* (holy or pure) as opposed to *pāpayonayah* (those born out of a womb of sin) in the previous verse, has an outmoded ring, for which we should make due allowance in the light of historical circumstances peculiar to the period. When we consider that *ahimsā* (non-hurting) as a doctrine came into vogue among modern brahmins only after the influence of heterodox religions like Buddhism and Jainism, while originally animal sacrifices were quite common among Vedic brahmins, we have a similar instance of religious revaluation which can change the position drastically. The question of caste here is similarly subjected to revaluation, but vestiges of the past still cling to it, as in the instance of the expressions referred to. Revaluation has gone on apace even after the time of the Gita, and in the modern Indian situation many saints have spoken against these caste distinctions altogether.

Among such Nārāyana Guru (1855-1928) occupies a central and significant position. He has subjected the question to proper philosophical scrutiny, and in condemning caste and declaring that all men belong to one and the same caste, kind or species, he has the advantage of the favourable breezes of modernism to which we have already alluded.

Caste distinctions are as repugnant to the spirit of Vedānta as they are to the modern man, influenced by notions of justice and democracy, which may be said to be the special contribution of the West.

The brahmin and the pariah are both looked upon as human beings first, and any difference of custom or tradition between them has no longer any significance in the present condition of society This is where the Guru and the reformer may be said to meet as it were

The concluding admonition in this verse is intended to sum up the position arrived at, at the end of this important Chapter This world is joyless as perhaps too well recognized in the philosophy of Buddhism The values in this world into which we are born naturally are tantalizing and do not have any lasting character The way out of it is through adoration of the Absolute along the lines given so far

[34] *manmana bhava madbhakto*
madyaji mam namaskuru
mam evai shyasi yuktvai vam
atmanam matparayanah

Become one with Me be devoted to Me, sacrifice to Me, bow down to Me unifying thus yourself, you shall surely come to Me, your supreme Goal none other than Me

This verse repeats in other words what has been said at the end of the last verse The object of the repetition evidently is to end the Chapter on the note which as we have seen has been running through the whole Chapter

The expression *manmana bhava* (become Me-minded *i e*, attain to mental identification with the Absolute) is quite in keeping with the Upanishadic dictum that a *Brahman* knower verily becomes *Brahman* (the Absolute) or reaches the Supreme as stated in the *Taittiriya Upanishad* and elsewhere

When the mind attains identity with the Absolute it loses all its egotism and a sense of agency in actions When union *is thus established at the level of the mind* other attitudes follow in outward actions Here outward actions which belong to religious or spiritual discipline are again referred to one after another

The expression *madbhakto* (be devoted to Me) refers to a religious attitude *madyaji* (sacrifice to Me) to the ritualist context, and *mam namaskuru* (bow down to Me) refers to the most overt form of behaviour involving the body again in the context of spirituality Such wholesale affiliation at all levels

and representing different contexts brings together all possible attitudes into one wholesale affiliation to the Absolute

The result indicated here when examined side by side with the same verse as nearly repeated in xviii, 65, reveals a subtle distinction intended by the author Whereas at the end of the Gita attaining the Absolute is spoken of more in terms of an implied duality between the worshipper and the Absolute, here it is conceived in terms of Self knowledge. The Absolute is within oneself Such is the pure position of the Upanishads as expressed in the *mahavakyas* (great sayings) such as *tat tvam-asi* (That thou art) The pure teaching intended in this Chapter is thus naturally stated with the above difference A certain balancing of two aspects of the same Self is what happens here when surrender to the Absolute has taken place

It would be relevant to add that most of the important points of this Chapter have already been once covered in Chapter iv, under the caption of *Jnana Yoga* (Unitive Wisdom) It was however as placed among other Chapters of recognized branches of wisdom that the subject was treated there in a preliminary fashion No question of living the way of wisdom or mixing wisdom with spirituality generally understood was thought of in the earlier Chapter, although the main high lights of the doctrine were covered in a summary fashion

Here the same is treated with all its concomitant and sub sidiary bearings bringing in even those aspects of spiritual life which have been considered to be outside the domain of pure wisdom

The open character and catholicity implied in this Chapter and the high hope which it holds out to every human being give this Chapter a status of its own at the centre of the work The technical and scientific details of establishing bipolar rela tionship with the Absolute which is perhaps the central teach ing of the Gita finds finalized expression Being thus related to the Absolute is the way recommended for freedom from the ills of life or salvation as the Chapter sums up its penulti mate verse

The acceptance of even puerile forms of worship as permis sive in this kind of affiliation to the Absolute is perhaps one of the special contributions of the Gita Orthodoxy is still capable of being reconciled with the way of wisdom Thus without breaking with the past the Gita accomplishes what few prophets have ever achieved in fulfilling without destruction

In aiming a sledge hammer blow at the citadel of caste and in admitting even the worst sinners into its most generously-conceived fold, the Gita as understood in this Chapter, excels

The claim that this Chapter contains the most secret of secrets, as also the most open ways of wisdom is more than justified when we examine it closely, although perhaps the statements in earlier preliminary Chapters might appear more sublime, at a first reading

Krishna opens his mind to Arjuna without reserve here, but it is in the next Chapter that the initiative becomes more explicit It is the neutrality of this Chapter which, reflected in many verses, enshrines the great secret

By treating good and bad on a par both as items to be transcended by a unitive way of life, by speaking of the Absolute as both existent and non existent, by its stress on the need to transcend both sin and even virtue, while still extolling the numinous value factor implied in the Absolute and stressing the need for knowing the Absolute as it ought to be known *according to first principles proper to the Gita (in verse 24)*, by all these features this Chapter deserves to be considered as having an important central place in relation to the teaching of the Gita taken as a whole Our survey of later Chapters will help us to verify the validity of this claim beyond dispute

iti srimad bhagavadgitasupanishatsu brahmavidyayam
yogasastre srikrishnarjunasamvade
rajavidyarajaguhyayogo nama navamo 'dhyayah

Thus ends in the Upanishads of the Songs of God, in the Science of the Wisdom of the Absolute, in the Dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna the Ninth Chapter entitled Unitive Contemplation as a Royal Science and Crowning Secret

CHAPTER X

THE UNITIVE RECOGNITION OF POSITIVE VALUES

Vibhūti Yoga

THE initiative on the part of Krishna continues unabated, and in fact is in some respects more accentuated than in the last Chapter which, as we have pointed out, together with the present one, approaches the Absolute from two viewpoints which may be said to be different only by a negligible angle.

Intellectual and spiritual notions regarding the Absolute were reconstructed to the end of the previous Chapters more or less from the subjective standpoint in which the disciple's doubts were dispelled and questions answered in a certain order tacitly kept in mind by the author.

The disciple has his doubts dispelled, but all knowledge is not gained by this. There is the positive conquest of knowledge as it penetrates stage by stage from the theoretically objective to full objective realism at the end of the Gita.

It is easy to discern this turning point at the beginning of this Chapter. In the second verse Krishna does not hesitate to praise himself as being non-understandable even to the gods and sages.

There follows an enumeration of certain spiritual qualities which are expressions of the absolutist way of life. What this way of life accomplishes for the individual in terms of wisdom or Self-realization is also stated by Krishna.

Then comes a section where Arjuna recognizes all that is claimed by Krishna and more, thus making the adoption between them as complete as possible. At the specific request of Arjuna there follows a long enumeration of what in this Chapter is called the *Vibhūti* (unique value). The value or glory of the Absolute can be known from the inside of each individual. It is not so easy to speak of the Absolute in terms of objective manifestations or other overt values. The reason for this is a fact recognized by Arjuna himself in verse 15. But it is highly necessary that for purposes of life's guidance

here that we should have more realistic conceptions of Absolute values than in just abstract or subjective terms

Though with some hesitation therefore, Krishna here enumerates all those highlights in the scheme of real things that we deal with in this world Though they do not cover all cases, they offer to the seeker enough variety of examples by which the unique glory of the Absolute could be recognized as it penetrates through the commonplace This is sufficiently explained in the concluding verses of the Chapter

The overall characteristics of the Absolute as they are to be recognized in the world of reality are summed up finally by the words *vibhutimat srimad urjitam* (whatever has unique living value, abounding in grace and well founded [in truth])

It is true that only a fraction of the Absolute becomes evident coming into the open for purposes of recognition as stated in the last verse But this does not detract from the importance of recognizing the Absolute from the standpoint of the person who wants to guide his life or have aspirations in his life in keeping with the Absolute

It should be noticed also in passing that these values do not belong to any known codified religion They are selected from a wide range of values some of them falling generally within the scope of religion and ethics but a few which may be questioned as not falling strictly within what is usually understood as the field of the sacred or the good, such as the instances of the gambler and the god of love

In spite of all these concrete references, we find that even philosophically this Chapter is on a par with the previous one, for there are statements such as in verse 4 where existence and even non existence are said to be issuing from the Absolute outlined here

Sribhagavan uvacha

[1] *bhuya eva mahabaho*
srinu me paramam vachah
yat te ham priyamanaya
vakshyami hitakamyaya

Sri Krishna said

Again O Mighty Armed (Arjuna) listen to My supreme word which I desiring your well being shall tell you, so dear (and favourably disposed)

This opening verse reveals unmistakably the kinship and equality of status with the previous Chapter with its initial expression *bhūya eva* (furthermore). The expression *paramam vachah* (supreme word) also indicates that the subject-matter pertains to the highest Absolute.

Not only is Krishna actively interested in teaching Arjuna because, as he says, he is dear, or as otherwise interpreted, the teaching pleases him, but also because as he says, he is interested in his welfare.

[2] *ne me viduh suraganāh*
prabhavam na maharshayah
aham ādir hi devānām
maharshīnām cha sarvasah

Neither the hosts of the gods nor the great sages know
My origin ; for I am indeed in every way the source
of the gods and the great sages.

Krishna is not just boasting and saying he is superior to all others. He specifically refers to *devas* (divinities), *i.e.* those spiritual ideals belonging to the hypostatic context of the Vedic gods, and refers to sages who have existed in India even before the time of the Vedas. The highest notions held or represented by either of these groups fall short of the notion of the Absolute.

By reference to himself as the source and the origin and not as the end, the author intends to touch that neutral point starting from which all the various manifestations are to be later enumerated in an organic fashion.

Before going on to the ramifications, the root or source is mentioned. The Absolute is appraised at its own zero or neutral point here. Spiritual values suggested by deities or sages are treated as being only secondary in importance. This superiority to all that is relative is what justifies the use of the word *paramam* (supreme) in the previous verse.

[3] *yo mām ajam anādim cha*
vetti lokamahesvaram
asammūdhah sa martyeshu
sarvapāpaih pramuchyate

[4] *buddhir jnanam asammoahah*
kshama satyam damah samah
sukham duhkham bhavo bhavo
bhayam cha bhayam eva cha

[5] *ahimsa samata tushtis*
tapo danam yaso yasah
bhavanti bhava bhutanam
matta eva prithagvidhah

Reason, wisdom, non delusion, patience truth, self restraint, calmness, pleasure pain, becoming and non becoming, sense of danger and security,

non hurting, balance, contentment, austerity, benevolence fame shame, are the various distinct attitudes arising from Me alone

These two verses enumerate a series of spiritual values, some of them merely referring to conscious attitudes and others referring to overt facts or acts It is difficult to imagine a common epistemological framework into which these concepts fit, except by treating all of them indifferently by making allusion to primary spiritual values, irrespective of their being subjective, objective, or in the form of an attitude or act

We should imagine as implied here, a man who is perfectly established in the neutrality of the Absolute beginning to exercise or enter into conscious or positive awareness *vis a vis* the Absolute

The first positive movements of the spirit as it were, are enumerated indifferently, as having to do with primary spiritual values The most important feature to notice here is that opposites are brought together soon after the enumeration of such factors as self restraint, forgiveness, etc, which are global attitudes of the spirit Pleasure pain, fear-courage and even existence nonexistence are the polarized movements within which the spirit swings, as we depart more and more from the neutral source of the spirit, indicated in the previous verse

In verse 4 which starts with reason and ends with courage we can discern a family group of spiritual attitudes or feelings which belong more to the philosophic than to the religious context.

In verse 5, however, which again starts with enumerating global spiritual sentiments such as the attitude of non hurting and ends with the dual factors of fame and obloquy treated together, we have a series which can be said to be more religious than philosophic

The whole list however may be said to refer to *bhavah* (moods or attitudes) by which the spirit of man is capable of representing the Absolute in himself or as expressed overtly

A comparison of the series contained in these two verses with that in vii, 4 where besides the elemental factors in creation mind reason and egoism were included calls for some clarification

In the earlier Chapter the enumeration was based on the concept of action viewed phenomenally The inclusion of mind reason and egoism there was because these also were subject to phenomenal fluctuations as they pertained to the lower and not to the higher nature of the Absolute

Here, however the basic concept for the enumeration of factors is *bhavah* (distinct attitudes or expressions) Nature exists by necessity but the person established in the Absolute gives expression to certain values through his dispositions, attitudes or behaviour It was with a view to explaining the Absolute that the earlier Chapter enumerated the eight fold factors In the present Chapter however the need for such an explanation has been accomplished The enumera tion here refers to the various expressions attitudes or actions which naturally flow out from that neutral point which marks the source or the Absolute in a man who understands it philosophically

We shall see how a further degree of expression is reached in a later Chapter where it is not expressions but a vision of the Absolute in so far as such is possible is attempted While the treatment in Chapter vii may be said to be negative here it is stated in distinctly positive terms

In the next Chapter the positive character becomes accentuated to such a degree that it makes the description of the Absolute so complete and vivid that some writers have taken objection to it as being of the nature of a crude theophany

Further Chapters mark the same process of positive realism in style and treatment till we touch actual problems such as practical ethics diet and social organization once again

[6] *maharshayah sapta pūrve*
chatvāro manavas tathā
madbhāvā mānasā jātā
yeshām loka imāh prajāh

The seven great sages of old, as also the four law-givers (*manus*) are born from My own process of becoming and mind, and from these all progeny in the world.

The *rishis* (sages) and the *manus* (law-givers) belong to two different and divergent developments in spiritual traditions. At the source of the mystical and contemplative tradition we must place the *rishis* (sages, seers or bards) who were people cut away from society living their own lives free from social obligation and sometimes transgressing the rules of society. They were individualists.

The other order referred to who are named here as *manus* (law-givers, thoughtful men) were persons who were socially and legalistically minded. They laid down the codes for the government of people who belonged to a certain group. But during the long course of history it sometimes happened that what was laid down by the rule-maker had to be drastically revised in the light of changed circumstances. The intervening period between one *manu* (law-giver) and another has been named *manvantara* (period of a *manu*) of which fourteen constitute a " day of Brahmā " and of which the present is said to be the seventh. These refer to natural periods of time in which a certain tradition remains in vogue with a given group of people. If we think of humanity in different groups or " races ", as it has been sometimes suggested, these *manus* may all be considered as belonging to the same period at the very beginning of the human race, if such a beginning can be fixed. But it is more probable that these law-givers succeeded one another through *manvantaras* (periods of a *manu*). The names of the first seven are given as follows : Svāyambhuva (the author of the *Manusmriti* or famous Code of Manu), Svarochisa, Anuttami, Tāmasa, Raivata, Chākshusha and Vaivasvata.

Whether they existed as contemporaries or succeeded one another is not of much consequence for us here. What is important to understand is that the two classes mentioned, the sages and the law-givers, who in themselves represent particular spiritual values important to human life, whether

collective or individual, have both one common origin in the neutral Absolute, just in the same manner as the other spiritual values enumerated above

Maharshayah sapta purve (the seven great sages of old) refers to the poet hermits whose names have been renowned in the Vedas The *Mahabharata* in which the Bhagavad Gita appears, in Book xii, lists the following Marichi, Atri, Angiras, Pulaha, Kratu, Pulastya and Vasishta Other lists of seven are given, *e g*, Kutsa, Atri, Rebha, Agastya, Kushika, Vasishta and Vyashva, and sometimes other names are included, such as Gotama, Bharadvaja, Vishvamitra, Jamadagni, Kasyapa, Daksha, Prachetas, Bhrigu and Narada (see *Shataptaha Brahmana*, xiv, 5 2 6, and *Harivamsa*, 417 ff)

In this verse the different sets of public or private values are personalized They are represented by the law giver or the hermit type of ancient spiritual person The difference is similar to that we know to exist between the law giver Confucius and the mystic Lao Tze in China

When the mind (of vii, 4) begins to function it tends to become directed to society because mind is the seat of the ego and the interaction of ego and ego is the basis of social life which throws up the social man But when pure becoming works out its own nature we find types representing the natural man who may be even anti social but still spiritual according to the best standards of spirituality known to the *srutis* (revealed spiritual texts), though not to the *smritis* (remembered codes of behaviour) to which latter section the law givers naturally belong Thus the sages and law givers represent two branches of the Absolute when it enters into the domain of human affairs

[7] *etam vibhutim yogam cha*
mama yo vetti tattvatah
so vikampena yogena
yujyate na tra samsayah

He who understands according to fundamental principles My unique value together with its unitive balance, by non wavering contemplation attains union In this there is no room for doubt

The process of becoming which has its origin in the Absolute as it has been traced so far has two distinct aspects

The first is called *vibhūti* (unique value) and the second is called *yoga* (neutral union).

These two should be understood as indicated by *tattvataḥ* (according to first principles). In other words these are fundamental notions of methodology, epistemology or value.

If *vibhūti* represents a unique value as we have said, such a value must be the resultant of a unitive or neutral appraisal of it, in which the opposites are cancelled out.

Any value to which a person could be related in order that it might affect him in any worthwhile manner must be thought of not merely as a process in a changing flux of becoming, but in terms of something that has attained stability and is thus of significance in human relationships.

In attaining such a stable equilibrium as a value there are always opposites or counterparts involved. Herein consists the *yoga* or neutral unifications referred to. Yoga is always a balancing, a neutralization, a cancelling out or an equation of component parts. Thus the process of becoming and its own stabilization, in order to make worthwhile values emerge, is the subtle understanding called for in this verse.

Conversely, it is suggested here that a man capable of such understanding himself does not fluctuate between poles of his own personal tendencies. The unitive and stabilized value which he is capable of appreciating and with which he has established a bipolar relationship, has the effect of inducing the same stability in his own personality. He thus becomes established in a yoga that never oscillates, as indicated in the phrase *avikampena* (non-wavering). Such a steady relationship established between himself on the one hand, and a Supreme value on the other, must lead him to union with the Absolute.

[8] *aham sarvasya prabhavo*
mattam sarvam pravartate
iti matvā bhajante mām
budhā bhāvasamanvitāḥ

I am the Source of all ; from Me everything moves outward; understanding thus, the wise adore Me, endowed with the intuition of pure becoming.

Any implication in the previous verse suggestive of fixed states is quickly counteracted and corrected here. The

Absolute can be viewed both statically and as an eternal flux in the process of becoming Even *maya* (principle of negation) has been defined as *bhavarupa* (of the form of be coming) The wise ones alluded to by the word *budhah* here signify those who are capable of a contemplative view of reality where the factor of time or duration has its place All happenings have to be viewed dynamically as a process of becoming and not merely statically

A certain sympathetic emotion is implied in contemplation of the pure process of becoming when it refers to the Absolute The intellect is capable of appraising values only in the form of stills Those endowed with contemplation and who are intuitive are capable of entering into sympa thetic understanding of the flux of becoming It is the latter class who are referred to as *bhavasamanvitah* (endowed with a sympathetic intuition of pure becoming)

In view of the fact that in verse 2 the reference has been made to the source from wh ch everything flows out here the repetition of the same idea of generation must be to correct whatever wrong impression m ght be left from the previous verse

[9] *machchitta madgataprana*
bodhayantah parasparam
kathayantas cha mām nityam
tushyanti cha ramanti cha

With their relational minds affiliated to Me their *life tendencies penetrating in Me enlighten ng each* other and ever conversing about Me they are content and rejoice

The proper kind of relation to be established between the seeker on the one side and the Absolute on the other is again stated in a clearer form here Wh le the affiliation with the Absolute is considered here in as close terms as possible almost establish ng identity both at the mental or relational level of the personality and at the vital psycho physical level which latter s implied by the word *prana* (which can mean just breath life or vital tendencies) the one po ntedness of the surrender thus implied might make us think that the seeker is completely lost to all that exists around him as if absorbed in a mystic trance of exaltat on

But the second line of the verse refers to conversation with others of a similar inclination who might be present around him.

The normal occupation of a person steeped in the Absolute is not unconsciousness or abnormality of any kind, but a normal state in which he not only teaches others but is taught by others, while the mutual exchange of wisdom gives both parties the characteristic joy which comes from interplay of teaching and learning. They are both content and positively happy in this normal kind of life.

Too often we read of trances and other abnormal states as evidence of spirituality in mystical or yogic literature. Symptoms of blood pressure, of depression or exaltation, not to speak of childish forms of emotionalism, all pass as expressions of the contemplative life.

The Gita here presents a sober picture which suffers from no exaggerations. God-consciousness is a healthy and normal state as portrayed here. This does not mean, however, that abnormal states do not have any element of spirituality at all.

The spirit in which this verse is written is not different from IX, 34 and XVIII, 65, whose significance in the Gita we have sufficiently emphasized.

[10] *teshām satatayuktānām*
bhajatām prītipūrvakam
dadāmi buddhiyogam tam
yena mām upayanti te

To such established in unbroken union (with) affectionate adoration, I grant that kind of unitive understanding by which they attain to Me.

The result or reward of this dedication is not anything of the order of a *siddhi* (spiritual attainment) as usually mentioned in books on yoga, including such respectable treatises as Patanjali's *Yoga Sūtras.* This and the next verse refer to an award which might appear too simple or plain. It is of the order of Self-realization or what is here called *buddhiyoga* (unitive understanding).

This is a special phrase which runs throughout the Gita and is employed and extolled as early as II, 39, where it is contrasted with mere *karma* (action, ritual, works) which is condemned there as very inferior. In VI, 13 the term again

appears where it is employed in a more technical sense suggesting that one fallen from yoga re establishes a link with it through the medium of intelligence or reason

Here in this verse we find the expression used it would seem with the same intended precision The same expression is used in xviii 57 in summing up the whole teaching which is sufficient support for its importance as a significant phrase Moreover in x 4 we find *buddhi* (reason) occupying premier place among the unique values whose source is the Absolute The gift of intelligence or reason is the greatest which God could confer on man according to the teaching of the Gita

Attaining the Absolute is the other goal or reward referred to This itself should be understood in the same light of Self realization suggested in the next verse We could even change the idiom and say attaining to peace which would bring together three expressions which would have synonymous significance as they have always been recognized to be so in the language of Vedanta where *ananda atma* and *Brahman* (Joy Self Absolute) signify the same

[11] *tesham eva nukampartham*
aham ajnanajam tamah
nasayamy atmabhavastho
jnanadipena bhasvata

Specifically because of compassion for them I abiding as what has become the Self destroy the ignorance born of darkness by the sh ning lamp of wisdom

It is possible to attain to the Absolute by ascending to its status through worship meditation or otherwise by the process of introspection by which one may be said to sink into one s own true Self

Wisdom is the motive force in these methods Instead of a reference to worshipp ng the Absolute God or the Absolute is said here to take pity on the seeker of wisdom and identify himself with the Self of the seeker and so dispel the darkness of the seeker These two—worship on the part of the seeker and pity on the part of the Supreme—are com plementary processes and when put together amount to the same state of unity In the latter case it is the Absolute that influences the Self of the seeker The bounty of the Absolute

is the motive behind such an influence. Thus the reciprocity between verses 10 and 11 is perfect. God loves man as much as man loves God and identity results.

The comparison of wisdom to a bright light is a favourite simile in Vedānta. Between light and darkness there seems to be opposition, but in reality it is light alone without duality which is the valid factor. Though at first not logically convincing, this statement becomes dialectically valid because light alone can represent reality and not darkness which is merely negation and therefore non-existent.

For this reason the analogy of a lamp has become a favourite one in Vedanta, where the method is essentially dialectical, as we have shown many times already. The Absolute is sometimes called the Light of lights, as stated definitely in XIII, 17. Of all analogies that of light seems to clarify the nature of wisdom and this has been recognized by Plato and other philosophers, and teachers such as Jesus Christ, all over the world.

The term *atmabhāvasthah* (abiding as what has become the Self) is capable of being interpreted in such a way that the Self implied here represents the Absolute, or as referring to the Self of the seeker. Both ways give acceptable meanings in principle, but as a complement to verse 10 and as consistent with the general context here, it is the individual Self of the seeker into which the Absolute transforms itself because of compassion

Arjuna uvacha

[12] *param brahma param dhāma*
pavitram paramam bhavān
purusham sāsvatam divyam
adidevam ajam vibhum

[13] *āhus tvām rishayah sarve*
devarshir nāradas tathā
asito devalo vyāsah
svayam chai 'va bravishi me

Arjuna said

You as being the supreme Absolute, the supreme Abode, the supreme Purifier, the eternal divine Person, primal Divinity, the Unborn, the All-pervading—

all the sages say this of You, the divine sage Narada,
so too Asita, Devala, Vyasa, and You yourself confirm
it to me

Verse 12 opens a section of seven verses which is necessary for marking out two sets of *vibhutis* (unique or perfected values) which it would be wrong on any account to confuse These values, when grasped in most general terms, cover all perfected stages or states in the process of becoming which we are capable of conceiving, whether intuitively or objectively

Objective manifestations of the Absolute have a much lower status because only a fraction of the potency of the Absolute principle is said to be necessary to sustain them, as stated in the last verse of this Chapter

So far we have covered those aspects of becoming which fall within the scope of intuition rather than mere objectivity The transition into the other series of values or perfections calls for the literary device of Arjuna's accepting and questioning interlude

Arjuna in the first instance accepts the supremacy of the Absolute, above the Vedic gods and above even the non Vedic spirituality of India, both of which belong to his, natural heritage

When Arjuna in verse 15 says that the Absolute knows itself best, not from outside, but known as it were from inside the Absolute itself, he gives recognition to the fact that the intuitive method is what reveals the Absolute fully But still he requests guidance in the recognition of the touch of the Absolute wherever it occurs in the manifested world Thus the way is prepared for the last section where unique perfections or values or specific expressions of the Absolute are enumerated, an appendix as it were to the intuitive approach to wisdom

It takes two sides to make a statement of truth complete, especially in a dialogue of this kind It must be stated by one who knows it and understood by the hearer who is capable of grasping it If there is such a recognition on the part of the hearer, the case for the verity stated may be said to be fully accomplished

In the three verses that follow Arjuna gives full credit to and *accepts the teaching of* Krishna He is no longer a doubting questioner full of mistrust His conversion in principle to the

absolutist standpoint is complete. But there are matters of applied wisdom on which he still needs clarification.

The full character of the Absolute with all its implications is referred to in sufficiently familiar terms here. As the central reality of which the Gita treats is the Absolute, such a description of the particularized aspects of the Absolute can only heighten the understanding of life in the light of the Absolute.

In the list of authorities mentioned here, not only the generality of sages are cited, but particular reference to certain of them. Nārada is singled out as a *devarshi* (sage among gods). He is one who interprets Vedic wisdom to those who belong to the non-Vedic context, and *vice versa*. He is pictured in *Purānas* (sacred legends) as descending with his favourite *vina* (lute) from the domain of the gods to spy on mortals, and like the Greek Hermes, to carry tales about them again to the denizens on high. Thus he has gained for himself the name of *kalahapriya* (quarrel-making meddler). He is everywhere used as a literary device for purposes of revaluation of wisdom. His authority is therefore valuable here to Arjuna who represents in himself both the streams of wisdom.

Asita (the Dark One) was the son of the old *Rik Veda* sage and poet Kasyapa, and Devala was the son of Asita (or sometimes Asita and Devala are joined together as the name of a son of Kasyapa.) The name Asita has its own significance, since it means literally "not white", *i.e.* of non-Vedic appearance. This, coupled with Vyāsa who was also "black" or "dark" and who is also mentioned in this verse, has its own significance in the wisdom dialectics. These sages must be imagined to occupy strategic positions; Vyāsa being quite patently the most central of revaluators or "arrangers" in the whole field of Indian spirituality, beginning from the *Mahābhārata* to the *Brahma-Sūtras* and the father of Vedānta.

The crowning conviction for Arjuna in regard to Krishna's supreme status, however, comes from Krishna himself who is his immediate Guru and who has himself stated this verity about the Absolute in reference to himself earlier in this Chapter and elsewhere. The validity of this testimony is therefore complete all round as required by the *sāstras* (text-books). Thus the acceptance by Arjuna of the claims of Krishna becomes natural, as stated in the next verse.

[14] *sarvam etad ritam manye*
yan mam vadasi kesava
na hi te bhagavan vyaktim
vidur deva na danavah

I believe that all this that You say is valid O Kesava (Krishna), neither the divinities nor the demons, O Lord, know Your unique nature

Although other authorities have been cited Arjuna seems to rely wholly on evidence that is centred in Krishna himself as representing the Absolute for he says that even the divinities and their counterparts the *danavah* (Titans i e those who opposed the Vedic divinities) can never understand the unique individual character belonging to the Absolute as such, gods and their titan opponents have only a relativist or tribal status

The expression *vyakti* (individuation) refers to this individual character more than to mere manifestation This becomes clear from the next verse which points out that the best evidence of the Absolute can only be from the standpoint of the Absolute itself All relativist approaches are different photographs taken from different angles only, never capable of giving the complete picture as Bergson ably explains in his *Introduction to Metaphysics*

Public verification is discarded in favour of a purer approach to the Absolute through one s own consciousness The *devas* (Vedic gods) and the *danavas* (titan opponents of the Vedic gods) can only get partial views of reality Though the *danavas* (Titans) are said to be inferior to the *devas* (Vedic gods) in the matter of knowing the Absolute, both have here a status of equality

The word *ritam* (valid) does not mean exactly the same as *satyam* (true) which latter is used when there is positive conviction by the use of intelligence Arjuna s present state is one of belief rather than conviction

[15] *svayam eva tmana tmanam*
vettha tvam purushottama
bhutabhavana bhutesa
deva deva jagatpate

You Yourself indeed know Yourself by Yourself most high Godhead presiding Principle of elemental

expression and of becoming, Light of shining ones, the Lord of the universe.

The best way to wisdom is through intuition which is an approach different from objective knowledge. The way of intuition is to identify oneself with the object or, in other words, to abolish as far as possible, subjective and objective prejudices which hide the true nature of the thing as viewed from its own inside. The present verse supports the view that the Absolute is best known to the Absolute by its own norms and standards. Outside norms only measure as if by guesswork, indirectly at best, through symbolic language or inference.

Knowledge, the object of knowledge and the meaning are all here conceived as belonging to one normative Principle, the Self, which is a measure of all things. The methodological requirement of abolishing the natural tri-basic (*triputi* in Vedānta terminology) tendency in cognition is here openly discarded, and though the status of the Absolute is still spoken of as a divinity or a theological entity of some kind, we find it raised beyond all such suspicions of theology, or above what is merely theistic.

This is suggested by each of the series of epithets: *purushottama* (most high Godhead), *bhūtabhāvana bhūtesa* (presiding Principle of elemental expression and of becoming), *devadeva* (God of divinities or Light of shining ones, *i.e.* Light of lights), *jagatpate* (Lord of the universe). The latter perhaps has a theistic flavour in the usual sense, but is still capable of being understood in the light of pure philosophy. Inserted as the Gita is in the *Purānic* context of the *Mahābhārata*, the author adopts a style which would apply both to theology and philosophy at once.

[16] *vaktum arhasy aseshena*
divyā hy ātmavibhūtayah
yābhir vibhūtibhir lokān
imāms tvam vyāpya tishthasi

Be pleased to tell me without omission of the divine perfections of Your own Self by which specific expressions You pervade these worlds, while remaining (apart).

In spite of certain indications given about perfections as applied to the Absolute earlier in this Chapter, here we find Arjuna insistent on hearing from Krishna of whatever aspects have not been covered so far in the earlier enumeration This is what justifies the expression *aseshena* (without remainder) by Arjuna

In verse 18 the eagerness of Arjuna is further underlined and in Krishna's reply which begins with the expression *hanta* (alack! well, now!) there seems to be unwillingness or hesitation to enumerate his flimsy glories as if they were of little importance philosophically But Arjuna takes care in verse 17 to give his reason for asking the question in very explicit terms. It is for fuller guidance in visualizing or conceiving the Absolute properly Krishna accordingly gives Arjuna a sufficient number of instances for his guidance.

The word *tishthasi* (You remain) is reminiscent of the word *sthito* (I stand) in verse 42, which is derived from the same root. The Absolute exists without being tainted by its own manifestations in the worlds. It is not a mechanistic relationship in which the converse of a proposition holds good, but one in which the converse is not true Existence reveals God, but God is not to be identified with existence (see *Taittiriya Upanishad*, II, 6 and *Gita* VII, 12)

[17] *katham vidyam aham yogina*
tvam sadā parichintayan
keshu-keshu cha bhāveshu
chintyo 'si bhagavan mayā

How shall I, constantly meditating on You, know You, O Mystic (yogi), in what particular expressions, O blessed One, are You to be cognized by me?

The reference to Krishna as a yogi in preference to all other epithets like *bhagavan* (blessed One) here is significant. As we have explained under verse 7 *vibhuti* (unique perfection or value) and yoga here have a subtle interconnection. It is in reference to the power of yoga which comes near to that of *mayā* (principle of negation) but devoid of any derogatory stigma, that the word yoga is often applied. The yogi is sometimes even compared to a magician, and

all mixing up of values to produce entities which are desirable or attractive is a result of the magic of yoga. It has its origin in the Absolute. Contemplative values emerge from the vague matrix of the Absolute as highlights from the general background of a painting and, when they are sufficiently respectable as properly belonging to the mystical context, the author of such manifestations, *i.e.*, the Absolute, could legitimately be called a yogi. This is exactly the meaning of the word here.

Having spoken of the Absolute as knowing Himself best, the reference to him as a divine Yogi here is but one degree removed in favour of the actual enumeration of perfections in the visible world which we are about to enter upon. The yogi who can work magic and the effect that is magical both belong to the Absolute.

It is suggested that in meditating on such a yoge aspect, the seeker himself would be better guided in the path of the Absolute. Arjuna as a seeker wants to be guided by visible perfections of the Absolute recognizable here and now.

The expression *tvām sadā parichintayan* (constantly meditating on you) would seem at first sight to be a superfluous condition when the perfections to be enumerated belong to a manifested world. But it should be noted that it is not objective values alone that are referred to below. They are values which are revealed only to the eye of a person who has at least entered into a mood of recognition of higher values. The values do not by themselves automatically impress the mind of the seeker. Hence the necessity of being always in a meditative mood. In the reference to the gambling of the gambler for example, the implied value is not evident on the surface, nor is the grandeur of the Himalaya as a value, to take but two examples from the great number of cases given.

[18] *vistarenā 'tmano yogam*
vibhūtim cha janārdana
bhuyah kathaya triptir hi
srinvato nā 'sti me 'mritam

Tell me, again in detail, O Janārdana (Krishna), of your balanced perfections and specific expressions, for I am never satiated by hearing your words of ambrosial immortality.

The request is repeated with the additional reference not only to desire for guidance, but *in the name of sheer enjoyment* itself The 'cognition' desired in the first instance is here supported by sheer 'affection' for the wisdom, which, taken together with conation already covered in Chapter IX fulfils all the psychological prerequisites for a wholehearted affiliation to wisdom, even in its most specific aspects

Arjuna refers to the wisdom as the ambrosia that gives immortality and adds further that he would never be satiated The seeker for the Absolute has been compared elsewhere *to a bee sipping nectar in the heart of a lotus The more* it sips, the more the taste for wisdom increases, and because the Absolute represents eternal value, there is no term that could be set for its satisfaction

Vibhuti (unique value, perfection) and yoga (neutral union) are here alluded to again Instead of particularized expressions which are going to be enumerated presently, this more general reference is to conform to the theme of the Chapter as a whole by way of concluding this section, where Arjuna's conversion to the standpoint of Krishna is completed The mutual adoption is wholehearted and strictly bipolar with no misgivings or mistrust

Sribhagavan uvacha

[19] *hanta te kathayishyami*
divya hy atmavibhutayah
pradhanyatah kurusreshtha
na sty anto vistarasya me

Krishna said
Ah ! I shall recount to you the (bright) glorious values that pertain to Myself, (graded) according to their importance O Best of the Kurus (Arjuna), for there is no end to the elaboration of items pertaining to Me

The section dealing with the long enumeration of specific, unique or glorious values which emerge to view in our life as it is actually lived to which reference was made in the *introduction to this Chapter begins here As in the case of* Hamlet s ghost when it was unwillingly compelled to speak

about itself, we find a characteristic interjection here, *hanta* (ah !) which can mean "alack" or 'alas' The world of the spirit has a certain hesitation or unwillingness to become the subject of overt commonplace discussion One could even say that God himself likes to remain unseen, untainted by the vulgar look of a humanity which belongs to the market place It is at the insistent request of Arjuna that a concession is made here When God makes his appearance to the common human eye it degenerates into a theophany which theologians have quite rightly condemned This charge may at first sight appear to apply to the enumeration in this Chapter and more definitely to the next Chapter, where Arjuna has the vision of God But those who level these charges forget one important difference which is that it is not a mere theistic God which is the subject of discussion in the Gita at all as we have many times pointed out, but a far higher subject The difference will be expressly brought out in xv, 17 and 18

The unique values are further qualified as being *divya* (divine) If theism is excluded how can this epithet be justified ? This would be a natural question But if we look at the derivation we find it is light or brightness which is referred to, as in viii, 26 The Absolute has its bright aspects Aditya, which is named first in verse 21, has brightness as its expression and although some of the other items may not have brightness explicitly as in this case the principle of brightness or at least positiveness is implied in all these enumerated values

The term *pradhanyatah* (according to their importance) shows that the list is graded though by no means exhaustive, as implied in the term *vistarasya* (to the elaboration of items) that pertain to the Absolute This has to be read side by side with the two concluding verses where the secondary character intended here for enumerated items is further underlined

[20] *aham atma gudakesa*
sarva bhutasaya sthitah
aham adis cha madhyam cha
bhutanam anta eva cha

I am the soul O Gudakesa (Arjuna), seated in the heart of all beings and I am the beginning and the middle and even the end of beings

In keeping with the treatment throughout the Gita where cosmology and psychology are dealt with side by side, here the *first and most important item of the glory* and unique value of the Absolute is stated in terms of the Self, before passing on to items that have more of a cosmological significance To treat cosmology and psychology together is one of the peculiarities of contemplative epistemology, as we have already seen in VII, 4, where the eightfold division of the Absolute includes earth at one end and the "I" sense at the other end

Here, however, even the vestige of duality which persisted in Chapter VII as between the lower and the higher Self is further abolished

Earlier in the present Chapter there is a list of qualities or virtues which are said to issue from the Absolute where also duality is present between those virtues which depend upon intelligence and others that depend upon personal attitudes *In the present verse it is neither nature nor virtue which is* dealt with, but a series of values conceived more unitively, and graded according to an epistemological principle in which the Self as an overt entity is given a primary place. *Thus the idea of the Self here approaches as near as could* possibly be to the concept of a soul understood as an entity rather than as being identical with the Absolute or *Brahman*. Otherwise it could not be spoken of as being seated in the heart of all beings

Further, the reference to a beginning, middle and end, as applied to a purer concept of the Self would become irrelevant because the Absolute Self is beyond time The reference to relative time here, however, is consistent with what has been said in verse 2, though not with what is implied in verse 3 We have already explained how this Chapter is on a par with the last, although the needle here deflects a little towards the positive appraisal of the Absolute, instead of being only a little short of the neutral zero in Chapter IX. The norm or the zero had to be indicated for the appreciation of the subtle difference in treatment which we have just pointed out Hence the justification for verse 3

When the Self is seated in the heart it conforms to the description in verse 3, but when it is the beginning, middle and end, it conforms to the more practical or realistic picture implied in verse 2 *Instead of being merely the source of* beings, as mentioned in verse 2, here it is also the middle

and even the end. The asymmetry inevitable to a realistic approach is here rectified without losing its positive character. Time and eternity are here brought together as closely as possible without compromising the positive note of the Chapter

[21] *ādityanam aham vishnur*
jyotishām ravir amsumān
marichir marutām asmi
nakshatranam aham sasi

Of the Ādityas I am Vishnu, of luminaries the radiant Sun, I am Marīchi of the Maruts; among the stars I am the Moon

The enumeration of cosmological entities representing absolutist value gives first place to the Ādityās They represent luminaries pertaining to each month of the year (especially in the later *brahmanas* or later Vedic works) The twelve suns are supposed to shine together at the destruction of the universe, and Vishnu is the last of the series If we now think of Vishnu as representing Absolute value, we can easily see how the eleven other suns previous to him in the series are implicit in that very value which is the finalized one. Vishnuhood therefore includes and transcends all luminous values in the context of relative time or duration He might thus represent Absolute time and Absolute glory conceived together Thus cosmologically we arrive at the Absolute in terms of a supreme value in the eternal present The cosmological approach to the Absolute cannot possibly go any further.

Coming one step down from this pure and comprehensive notion of luminaries treated in the abstract, we come to the notion of *ravi* (the sun) which is a unitary entity among the existing luminaries, which would represent something unique or special, a sort of model by itself. The difference between other luminaries and the sun, it is suggested, is not one of mere degree, but of kind

From an objective luminary, we come in the next instance to Marīchi, *i e*, to an entity representing a mere ray of light It is therefore the qualitative aspect of light which gains prominence As the word also refers to one of the seven sages, to the first Manu, to one of the mind-born sons of

Brahma, and to Krishna himself, the implication here is that among the Maruts (which means indifferently vital breath" or ' shining or more comprehensively living beings in general) Marichi itself represents the radiant or shining principle The quantitative aspect gives place to the qualitative and reveals the Absolute through brightness as an abstract principle or even presence

The last example reveals the same underlying method In the light of actual objective astronomy as understood in modern times, it would be incongruous to say that among the stars the moon has any superiority or uniqueness , but considered merely from its relative prominence as we look at the full moon on a starry night what is intended here is unmistakably evident Sanskrit literature has the familiar figure of speech in which a beautiful woman surrounded by her handmaidens is compared to the moon surrounded by stars The moon stands out conspicuously in its unique glory among stars viewed in this way It is the uniqueness of the glory that matters here and not factual astronomy

[22] *vedanam samavedo smi*
devanam asmi vasavah
indriyanam manas cha 'smi
bhutanam asmi chetana

Of the Vedas I am the *Sama* Veda of the divinities I am Indra (Vasava), in respect of the senses I am the Mind, and of life expressions I am (pure) Intelligence

From the Absolute viewed from a cosmological angle, we turn again to one in which the approach is more subjective

The three Vedas represent those branches of learning which adorn a brahmin who represents a spiritual man One versed in the *Rig* Veda gives importance or primacy to *devas* (deities) and one versed in the *Yajur* Veda gives primacy to man The *Sama* Veda on the other hand praises *soma* (some juicy potent ontological principle) side by side with the *pitris* (ancestors) It represents a compromising synthetic middle way in spiritual learning the passages in it being drawn from the other two Vedas and as *Sama* also suggests song, or chanting it represents also an element of ecstasy All these mark the unique distinction of the *Sama* alongside

the other two Vedas The fourth or *Atharvana* Veda deals with black magic and therefore need not figure at all here in this grouping

The primacy given to Vasava or Indra, well known as the chief of gods, cited in the next example requires no explanation

The comparison established between the mind and the senses in the instance which follows might be objected to, as one that is between different classes or entities, because the mind is not generally counted as a sense organ But the sense organs may be said to inhere or be implied in the mind Mind has no being apart from them and itself may be considered as the focal point where the sensations coming through the different senses may be said to meet In such a revised sense the comparison is quite valid, especially when we remember that the Absolute always belongs to an order of its own, though related to its component members

Chetana (living intelligence) is the finest form of the expression of life Life itself is a process of constant becoming, and when it is not statically viewed pure becoming is a notion not far different from pure intelligence The difference is subtle and negligible Life can be equated with intelligence when both are understood in the purest terms, or intelligence may be said to be the cream of life itself

[23] *rudranam samkaras cha smi*
vitteso yaksharakshasam
vasunam pavakas cha smi
meruh sikharinam aham

Of the Rudras I am Samkara (Siva) of the Yakshas and the Rakshasas Vittesa (Lord of Wealth), of the Vasus I am Pavakah (the purifying elemental fire) and among heights I am Meru

Here we have a series which is conceived in very earthy or ontological terms. The name *rudra* suggesting roaring or howling can also refer to something of a necessary or matter-of fact order in life The tragic aspect of life which Siva represents as a destroyer need not be thought of as a value representing imperfection. Adversity itself has its sweet uses There are references in the Indian scriptures to many Rudras who treated together may be thought of as

representing a form of perfection or auspicious value derived from the Absolute as suggested by the name *sam kara* (causing happiness) which is a synonym for Siva

Yakshas and Rakshasas are said to represent a sort of cousin class of entities worthy of worship who attend on Kubera (here called Vittesa) the god of wealth To be wealthy even in a worldly sense may be said to be something unique and even glorious and good So in that category of supe riority to which Yakshas and Rakshasas also belong the lord of wealth occupies a unique place Each notion of the Absolute has to be understood from its own frame of refe rence or standpoint Perfection goodness or validity can distinguish entities belonging to classes or categories which are distinct or apart Superiority in one category does not mean superiority in another Thus Kubera or the lord of wealth is superior in his own context and not in the context of *devas* or divinities with which latter group he is not to be compared

In the hierarchy of beings belonging to Vedism Yakshas and Rakshasas do not occupy any laudable position much less Kubera their common chief His inclusion in the list of unique values enumerated here must depend not so much on goodness but rather on some trag c or strong note coming from *urjita* (something valid or radical) as in verse 41 The norms of Vedic orthodoxy are not strictly adhered to here

The Vasus often spoken of as eight in number are elemental divinities suggesting brightness goodness or beneficence Fire which is really one of them is spoken of here as represent ing all of them because it implies the potency of pur fi cation

Mount Meru has the uniqueness in *Puranic* cosmology of being the churning rod or axis round which the known universe revolves Geographically speaking Meru is dis tinguished by its height as against the Himalaya known for its massive grandeur When we take into account the quality of height of mountains Meru excels and thus its uniqueness is revealed and that is where its absoluteness inheres

[24] *purodhasam cha mukhyam mam*
viddhi partha brihaspat m
senaninam aham skandah
sarasam asmi sagarah

Even (in the case also) of the household priests, O Pārtha (Arjuna), know Me the Chief, Brihaspati; of the generals I am Skanda (the war-god); in respect of lakes I correspond to the ocean.

Brihaspati is a wise teacher of the Vedic gods, and also a law-giver. His claims to Vedic orthodoxy are sometimes questioned, although on the other hand, the authorship of certain Vedas or passages in the Vedas are sometimes attributed to him. He is also often referred to as the head of the rationalism anterior to the Sāmkhya philosophy. He can be taken generally to represent traditional wisdom at its highest, although himself belonging to a patriarchal or familial set-up.

The leader of the family priests here, referred to as Purodhas is a master of ceremonies in household Vedic ritualism. In such a category Brihaspati occupies a unique and glorious position. He represents absolutism as far as it can go in such a relativist framework.

The war-god Skanda represents prowess in the military context. He stands for a form of positive spirituality which is not merely a form of impotent piety.

In the lake and ocean reference, we should think of a person taking a walk through a district of beautiful lakes and while he is enjoying their beauty, his eye catches a glimpse of the ocean which dominates the whole scene. A sense of wonder marks the difference between the two appreciations. The object of the author here is to underline this qualitative difference. By referring to the ocean among lakes quite abruptly along with other examples in the same verse in which the values are more personal, it is not against the philosophy of the Gita to treat of physical entities alongside spiritual factors such as the ego or the mind.

[25] *maharshīnām bhrigur aham*
girām asmy ekam aksharam
yajnānām japayajno 'smi
sthāvarānām himālayah

Of the great hermit-sages I am Bhrigu; of articulated words I am the one-syllable (Aum); of sacrifices I am the sacrifice of silent repetition; of immovables I am the Himalaya.

Bhrigu typifies another type of spirituality conforming to what could be called the pattern of rishi or hermit They are different from priests or even pontiffs, being recluses or forest dwellers related more to the natural than to the social man Their life conforms to standards of pure mystical morality free from the rigid obligatory framework of social rules Although the authorship of the Vedas is attributed to them sometimes as also a patriarchal status of law givers, they are innocent and pure personalities who may be called originals in the spiritual pattern that each of them represents

Many Bhrigus have been referred to in ancient Indian writing, even a whole race of Bhrigus being sometimes mentioned It will suffice for us to understand here that this type of spiritual person has his absolute counterpart in a Bhrigu known generically through the ages associated with fire or its kindling

The one syllable referred to in this verse is evidently Aum and how Aum represents the Absolute has been explained in the *Mandukya Upanishad*

In the matter of repeating holy formulae, how this could be considered as a form of sacrifice is suggested in IV, 28 The superiority of silent prayer to loudly uttered formulae comes from the fact that the former approximates to contemplation which is subjective and involves no outer expression The more outward a prayer or sacrifice is, the more inferior is its grade in the true contemplative sense Loud prayers and elaborate ritual are often attributed in the *Puranas* (legends) to *rakshasas* (fierce demons) like Ravana or stalwarts like Bhima One is asked to say one s prayers in lonely privacy even in Christianity, and only Pharisees are supposed to make a public display of piety A life dedicated to the Absolute should conform to contemplative requirements rather than to social standards The superiority of contemplative sacrifices is also praised indirectly in IV 33

The immobility or stability or radical strength which is here singled out as the unique or specific quality of the Himalaya suggests the same subjective attitude implicit in the other examples A person who is withdrawn and whose spirit is attuned to his inmost Self gains a stability or steadiness which resembles the immobility of the Himalaya

[26] *asvatthah sarvavrikshānām*
devarshīnām cha nāradah
gandharvānām chitrarathah
siddhānām kapilo munih

Of trees (I am) Asvattha, and of divine sages Nārada; of Gandharvas, Chitraratha, (and) of those of psycho-physical attainments, Kapila the recluse.

Here the unitive principle on which the instances converge is that of a neutrality between extremes rather than one-sided glory of any kind.

The Asvattha tree (*ficus religiosa*) or banyan, has its aerial roots and therefore derives nourishment both from the ground and, theoretically at least, from the atmosphere. Although there are more glorious trees, this neutral example is chosen here because of having its roots as it were in heaven and its branches in the human world, as more completely pictured in the sequence of verses at the beginning of Chapter xv. It is not famed for its utility but has been valued for its religious associations throughout the ages in India, and it corresponds in some ways to the Ygdrassil of Scandinavian mythology.

Nārada is a typical go-between for gods and men and his nick-name is "scandal-monger". He is known as a *devarshi* (divine seer or sage) but his status as such is open to question. He is a kind of intermediate product between two different sets of spiritual values.

As for the gandharvas, they also occupy an intermediate position between regular heavenly divinities such as Indra, and mortals. Chitraratha as the name indicates, is the possessor of an ornamental chariot. Gandharvas are custodians of the *soma* plant with which they engaged themselves in healing the *devas* (divinities), in which matter they became rivals to the latter, Indra himself taking away the *soma* medicine by force. From all this we gather that the gandharvas belong to the mortal world as much as to the heavenly, and therefore represent a mysterious paradoxical value through their chief, here named Chitraratha.

The eight *siddhis* (psycho-physical attainments) are not divine qualities, but merely perfections attainable from the mundane side. Lightness of body, for example, does

not imply any supernatural quality, but can be understood merely as a psycho-physical attainment within the reach of man. The siddhas are those who possess such attainments, and are said to inhabit alternately the higher and lower altitudes of the Himalaya

Kapila, the reputed founder of the Samkhya (rationalist) system, being of the heterodox school, rightly represents the group, especially as the *siddhis* (psycho-physical attainments) mentioned in Patanjali's *Yoga-Sutras* have, in the Sāmkhya of Kapila, a natural counterpart Rationalism and yogic attainments meet in the person of Kapila and he thus represents a unique spiritual value belonging to a certain well-known context which is that of *munis* (recluses)

[27] *uchchaihsravasam asvanam*
viddhi mam amritodbhavam
airāvatam gajendranām
naranam cha naradhipam

Know Me among horses to be Uchchaihsravas, born of the ambrosia of immortality, of noble elephants, Airavata, and of men the king

From examples suggesting higher hypostatic values we come now to some belonging to the side of ordinary creation, such as the horse and the elephant.

The equestrian quality in a horse and the elephantine quality in an elephant are the aspects in which their own specific reality remains fixed It is the specific quality which always contains the virtue or value

Taking the example of Uchchaihsravas, the high-eared and neighing or, in other words, very sensitive horse of Indra which was obtained on the churning of the ocean of milk, the author puts his finger on one important item of unique though utilitarian value which comes within the range of human life.

The milk ocean is symbolic of the expansive world of values belonging to the human environment Churning throws out specific values from the general matrix of values This general matrix is here referred to as the ambrosia of immortality, because eternal values are to be kept in mind when we deal with contemplation of the Absolute

This horse then is not only a prototype of all horses but is supposed to excel all others and in this way is related to the unique value of the Absolute which, by itself, cannot be conceived by human thought in any definite form

The case of the elephant is a parallel instance It is also born from the ocean of milk or values

The example of a king among men is also very striking in that it serves to bring into relief the distinction which in principle exists between just one among many and that unique value which gives to the individual a totally different status A king might resemble a soldier in details of dress and appearance, but there is a qualitative difference in their status which is important to recognize To mistake a king for an ordinary soldier may sometimes have disastrous consequences Thus the unique value of a king among men is brought into relief through this example

[28] *ayudhanam aham vajram*
dhenunam asmi kamadhuk
prajanas cha 'smi kandarpah
sarpanam asmi vasukih

Of weapons I am the thunderbolt, of cows I am the milk yielder of all desires, of progenitors I am the god of erotics of serpents I am Vāsuki (their chief)

The distinct qualities belonging to weapons or to entities affecting human life adversely or favourably in a more ordinary sense are enumerated here

The thunderbolt of Indra is the fiercest of weapons and the poison of the king of serpents can have ominous significance They thus enter into the world of spiritual values in different ways

The cow of plenty of Indian mythology occupies an intermediate position covering all and sundry values comprising both necessity and luxury

Man must live and multiply and the principle of fecundity involved here is a value which is hypostatized in the chief of progenitors as also found in Indian mythology

Vasuki as the king of serpents represents a negative value gaining its status through potency rather than fecundity Potency is one of the important component parts of what is

generally understood as spiritual and therefore cannot be omitted

[29] *anantas cha smi naganam*
taruno yadasam aham
pitrinam aryama cha smi
yamah samyamatam aham

And I am Ananta of Nagas I am Varuna of the denizens of the deep, and Aryama of the ancestors I am Yama of controllers

The entities included here suggest on the one hand time or eternity Ananta which means endlessness is the snake of Vishnu Here it is the negative dark or existential aspects of eternity that are suggested by these various entities They may be looked upon as representing human values belonging to the background of the personality where retrospection and the consequent element of regret are also involved Varuna for example is regarded sometimes as the counterpart of Mitra the former having to do with darkness and the latter with the light of day

The *nagas* or cobras with human faces in mythology definitely belong to the nether world and it is safe to conjecture that they belong to some form of outmoded or overcovered spiritual tradition What is too negative or retrospective when we think of such semi human cobras is balanced or corrected when we think of Ananta where time is treated without asymmetry as the eternal present a notion in keeping with the absolutist outlook

With Varuna the presiding deity of the sea and the watery element in general the negative character to which we have referred is further confirmed as water has more inertia implied in it than fire Varuna is much feared as evident from Vedic prayers because he is supposed to know all the faults of his worshippers even the winking of an eye He is not just some god high above the world but part and parcel of the laws of existence which regulate human life here and now

Aryama as the chief of the ancestors is more connected with vaishyas (farmer merchants and women rather than with the highest class Pure or higher values are not implied in such an entity Ancestor worship has its retrospective lag

which is intended here to be corrected or balanced by the reference to Aryama, who perhaps represents the highest or furthermost point to which negative ancestor worship could be lifted

Yama is always located in the south and *vis a vis* the north has always occupied a place corresponding to Hades If heaven is in the Himalaya, Hades may be said to be at the pointed toe of South India This does not however mean that Yama has not been given an important place In fact in Vedanta, Yama sometimes (in *Katha Upanishad* for instance) occupies the place of a guru He represents the first man with his sister Yami the first woman His name suggests strict control and as Dharma Raja he is in charge of natural or spiritual laws and judgments bearing on justice The stern or inexorable character of Yama, like retribution, is a negative factor, in keeping with the other values alluded to above

[30] *prahladas cha 'smi daityanam*
kalah kalayatam al am
mriganam cha mrigendro 'ham
vainateyas cha pakshinam

And I am Prahlada of the Daityas, among bases of measurement I am time, and of beasts I am the lord of beasts (the lion), and Vainateya of birds

The Daityas have always been considered enemies of the Vedic gods They also inhabit the nether world At a time when the notion of Vishnu as representing the Absolute came into vogue one of the Daityas called Prahlada caught on to the new idea while his father Hiranyakashipu opposed him on this point Vishnu himself is said to have given recognition to Prahlada by making him a chief among Daityas As one capable of appreciating absolutism though still belonging to a non Vedic context Prahlada attains that unique value justifying his inclusion in the list here

Time which consists of moments is included in the abstract notion of pure time which is here called *kala* Each unitive moment is included in the general notion It is with these time units that all worthwhile measurements as in astronomy are made possible Thus pure time represents the Absolute in relation to moments based on which calculations are possible

There are many animals in the forest but the lion or the tiger, and especially the lion, has a striking, unmistakable supremacy which overshadows all the others In the sense of thus dominating everything else of the same kind, the lion is here held up as an example

Vainateya is a mysterious bird often referred to as the brother of the dawn because of its glory The fabled phoenix is a bird which is self immolated to be born again at once and represents the eternal present Some such idea is likely to be implied in Vainateya which by lineage is also related to Garuda (Vinata) the hypostatic bird vehicle of Vishnu Birds themselves, with their bright plumage and aerial flight in the glory of the bright sky, are symbols of the spirit of man seeking freedom, and it is therefore but apt that the mystery bird Vainateya should be given here a prime place as an absolutist value

[31] *pavanah pavatam asmi*
ramah sastrabhritam aham
jhashanam makaras cha 'smi
srotasam asmi jahnavi

Of purifiers I am the wind, I am Rama of bowmen
of fishes I am the *makara* of streams I am the Ganges

Fire which had the name of purifier in verse 23 of this Chapter is not the only purifier The wind is expressly spoken of as such here We know that water also cleanses The particular sense in which the wind is spoken of as a purifier here can be got from the fact that the wind is an ally of fire (*agni*) which is a supreme purifier In helping fire to purify a chance or selective influence is exerted by the wind It assists the fire to burn away dross and thus let purer values remain It can thus be thought of as the wind of occasionalism or chance The sifting or selection of inherent or lasting values may be regarded as belonging to the chance-like gusts of the wind

As a bowman Rama excels all others not only because of correct marksmanship but because of the absolutist character of the spiritual value he represents in his own personality In the *Ramayana* every weapon of Ravana is met by something superior on the part of Rama. Weapons here represent spiritual values in the process of revaluation The values that

Ravana is capable of representing are finally superseded by the weapon of all weapons known as *Rama bana* which is Absolute in its character It must be in this additional sense that Rama may be said to be unique as an archer

The *makara* is a semi mythological fish perhaps resembling the Gangetic cetacean *gavialis gangeticus* It is notorious for its voracity and just as the lion dominates the forest, so this *makara* dominates life in the waters Hence the place given to it here

The holiness of the Ganges is well known It is believed that a dip in its waters has the power of absolving one from all sin In another symbolic sense also the status of the Ganges becomes unique in that it represents the flow of beneficent values originating from the head of Siva It is thus a perennial value flowing through time for the benefit of man

[32] *sarganam adir antas cha*
madhyam chai va ham arjuna
adhyatmavidya vidyanam
vadah pravadatam aham

(In the structure) of cantos (or chapters) I am the beginning end and also the middle, O Arjuna, of the sciences (I am) the Science of the Self I am the dialectic of pre eminent dialecticians

The items here belong to the category of speech, literature, or branches of wisdom It is a well known rule in rhetoric or composition that in a paragraph or section of a book, the most important or conspicuous positions are the beginning, end and middle It is true that a cosmological interpretation can be given to the word *sarga* but in view of the fact that such a reference has already been covered in verse 20 and also considering the unity of this verse it is more likely that the rhetorical interpretation is intended In any work the essential content is likely to be mentioned at the beginning middle or end The structure of the Gita itself bears this out

Especially when understood as Self knowledge, the Vedanta is often referred to as the crowning jewel of wisdom or as the basis of all knowledge As it deals with the Absolute itself this description is justified The Upanishads refer to that kind of knowledge by knowing which everything here is known, where

the unitive grandeur of Upanishadic Self knowledge is extolled Such passages make the meaning here quite clear

When two people discuss there is an interplay of dialectic implied in the situation especially when such discussion enters into very subtle or specific matters of spiritual value This implied dialectic is here called *vada* which represents the neutral Absolute standing as it were between two differing points of view in theses cleverly sustained by adepts in the dialectic art The prefix *pra* being held to indicate *utkarsha* (special glory) and *khyati* (fame) supports the meaning here of a specially gifted dialectician If this kind of subtle dialectic is not meant here, *vada* can just mean reasonable or normal argument for finding the truth as against *jalpa* (overbearing wrangling) and *vitanda* (idle carping) as Sankara suggests But in our opinion dialectic is consistent with the subject matter of the Gita as we have many times said

[33] *aksharanam akaro smi*
dvandvah samasikasya cha
aham eva kshayah kalo
dhata ham visvatomukhah

Among syllabic letters I am the A and of compounds I am the paired compound I am also unexpended time I am the maintainer universally facing

The vowel A here called *akara* is implied in every other sound of the syllabaries (as in Samskrit and other Indian languages) whether vowel or consonant Even in vowels that sound different, the basic sound A is merely modified by the position of the speech organs This idea is found also in the Tamil *Tiru k Kural* As the common basis of all sounds the unique value of A among all syllables is quite evident

There are many ways by which words are compounded with others. The various types are called *samasas* Of the component parts of most of them one is treated as more important than the other But in the particular compound known as the *dvandva* (paired compound) both components are given equal status This reference is very apt and supports the contention put forward here that the author thinks in terms of dialectic rather than, as often thought of a reasoning leading to monism The Absolute cannot be conceived except through the method of neutralizing or cancelling-out of counterparts

The "here" and the "hereafter," the "universal" and the "particular," the "one" and the "many" have all to be treated unitively, after being conceived as a pair. That mysterious hyphen which joins the counterparts into a central or Absolute value, which is often but a mere wonder, is the nearest approach to the understanding of the Absolute which itself is beyond the reach of mind and work.

The reference to *kāla* (pure time), which is unexpended and therefore pure, represents the same subtle value. If this value belongs to the domain of intuition in the process of pure becoming, it has to be complemented by its own counterpart which is suggested by the word *dhātah* (maintainer) in the next item that follows. If a certain value in life is derived from its relation to *time* as by slow maturation, there are others which belong to *space*. These may be called horizontal values, while those related to time (in this sense) may be called vertical. The reference to time as a unique value here side by side with "gift" coming from every side calls for some philosophical explanation.

The world as we see it is established in space, although by intuition we can understand it also as a flux in pure time or becoming. But even as a flux we are able to be related to it in a continued or sustained manner. The world established in space has something stable about it which, though not static, relates human life to various human values, some ordinary and some superior. But both these sets of values, horizontal and vertical, should be thought of as belonging to the contemplative order. The spatial or horizontal values may be spoken of as gifts coming from the hands of the original Creator, resulting from the relation which a person is capable of having between himself and the value coming to him from the Author of things. These values may be said to be established in the world of space rather than time.

The word *visvatomukhah* (universally-facing) implies not only the four points of the compass, but all directions necessary to face the universe in every way. The universe itself is a value seen by a universal face. Thus it is a supreme gift as secondarily implied by the word *dhāta* (given).

Both these last two analogies have to be fitted into one time-space framework to result in the vision of the Absolute intended by the author here.

[34] *mrityuh sarvaharas chā 'ham*
udbhavas cha bhavishyatām

kirtih srir vak cha narinam
smritir medha dhritih kshama

> I am all engulfing death and the Source throwing up all things to be, and of womanly values, fame, grace, speech, memory, will power, firmness and endurance

The first line of this verse suggests a kind of paradox The process of becoming is viewed both prospectively and retrospectively at once Retrospectively viewed, inasmuch as everything is lost in ' yesterday s ten thousand years of time called *mrityuh* (death) But time prospectively viewed is also a creative principle in which all the tomorrows are implied The two examples taken together leaves us with a notion of the Absolute in the context of becoming as used by Bergson

The unique value mentioned above is of the nature of an abstraction which has at once to be supported by an example and for this purpose it would evidently seem that Vyasa enumerates the qualities which distinguish womanhood in the second line here

Seven qualities are mentioned and the relation of these qualities with the subject mentioned in the first line, could only be in that each quality is the resultant of two opposing forces in creative becoming represented in the personality of womanhood

Woman represents nature or becoming more than man and this is perhaps the reason why her example is chosen here Moreover the qualities of manhood have been mentioned elsewhere

Of the qualities enumerated, the first *kirtih* (fame) is a general or all covering one By merely being beautiful a woman might not come up to the requirements of true womanhood There is a group of qualities which contribute to the fame or reputation of a woman For example a beautiful woman might be immodest and lose her reputation

The next quality which enhances the value of womanhood is *sri* (well being or grace) This suggests harmony A woman who is worried or in want may be said to lose this grace and become a nagging nuisance

Vak (speech) does not suggest ability to chatter but rather the apt and pleasing use of speech which also implies the correct adjustment of the personality neither too positively into exaltation nor negatively into depression

Smriti (memory) gives depth to human personality. A man or woman without memory becomes easily a misfit in his or her normal environment Hysteria might refer to such a maladjustment

Many women lack that *medha* (will-power) which alone can balance the personality and keep it normal They are often subject to emotional crises, and the physiological and organic demands made on womanhood make them weak in the matter of taking firm decisions involving the power of will When women do have this will-power they get that distinction or value which is here noted as an expression of the Absolute.

Dhriti (firmness) is also a balancing factor like the previous will-power. At a moment of disaster, like the death of a near relative, true womanhood expresses itself in the form of this kind of firmness, when many men around them might break down

The last attribute of true womanhood is perhaps the most distinguishing quality *Kshama* (endurance) is expressed by a nurse like Florence Nightingale when she had to tend thousands of wounded troops From the Indian scene we can readily think of the patient endurance of a Sītā under the injustice of a Rama, or a Sakuntala who forgave and forgot the gross injustice of Dushyanta till chance reconciled them.

In every one of these qualities we should recognise an emergent value resulting from the neutralization of opposite tendencies

Fickleness is said to be normal to women, even by Shakespeare But this could be balanced into a properly feminine quality by its opposite of faithfulness, and when the mean is struck the unique values of womanhood mentioned here emerge.

[35] *brihatsāma tatha samnam*
gayatri chandasām aham
māsānam margasirsho 'ham
ritunam kusumākarah

Likewise, of hymns I am the *brihat-sama*, of metres I am the *gāyatri*, of months I am *margasirsha* and of seasons the flower abounding

From the present verse onwards absolutist values belonging to the category of luxuries are grouped together, leading

gradually to actualities of the contemporary period in which the author himself lived by way of concluding his series

In xv, 1 we find that the great Asvattha (fig) tree has leaves which are compared to the hymns of the Vedas Further in xv, 2 its buds are referred to as objects of sense It is therefore easily derivable that Vedic chants are items of luxury value, although high up in the scale of such values within the relative domain

Much importance is attached to the saving effect of chants such as the *brihat sama* and the *gayatri* by brahmins The word *gayatri* is said to derive its name from its power of saving the chanter Much speculation has been lavished by orthodoxy on the esoteric meanings and implications of the metre of these chants and the Upanishads revalue the *gayatri* (e g *Brihadaranyaka* v xiv 1 8 and *Maitri* 6 7) The potency of the chants is said to depend upon these esoteric considerations In the *Sama* Veda the *brihat sama* refers to a special kind of metre which is considered as very potent in its own proper context as the *gayatri* is in morning and evening prayers

The month of *margasirsha* which comes in December corresponds in India to that resting period in nature resembling the systole of the heart beat The overt phenomenal happenings are on either side of this resting period The harvests have been gathered in and it is too early for the ground to be prepared for the next crop The Indian sky is mostly clear at this time and it is also the time for nightly drummings in the villages drummings which go on to the small hours of the morning It is thus a resting period generally favourable for contemplation although the leisure afforded is often misused Leisure constitutes the luxury item here

How the flowering season of the Indian spring is an expression of a value in nature is easily understood

[36] *dyutam chalayatam asmi*
tejas tejasvinam aham
jayo smi vyavasayo smi
sattvam sattvavatam aham

I am the chance risk of (irresponsible) gamblers I am the brilliance of the brilliant (people) I am victory I am decisiveness I am the goodness of those established in the real

Miscellaneous everyday virtues as revealed in human society may be said to terminate the list of values here. It should be noticed, as we have pointed out, that it is not a conventional set of virtues that are held up to view. The gambler has a certain bold and skilful nonchalance, with an attitude of abandon ready to risk all for what he prizes most. One who is ready to lose all, will gain all, as the Biblical parable says. Thus the gambler's gamble, although it could hardly be counted as a virtue in the conventional social sense, has an intrinsic spiritual value in the context of pure absolutism. The sailor who risks his life for someone who has fallen into the sea is a gambler with life-values and is superior to many virtuous socially superior personalities.

When we examine closely the connotations of the terms employed, we find on the one hand *dhyūta* (the uncertain prize won in gambling) and on the other hand the attitude of irresponsibility implied in the word *chalayatām* (one who cheats, breaks his contract, or is incapable of keeping his word), *i.e.*, one who bases his conduct on chance. Thus between risk and chance there is an implied value which is here called *dhyūta*. It may be said to be full of indetermination, occasionalism or pure luck, good, bad or indifferent. A carefree abandon is here extolled.

Tejas which primarily means brilliance, implies an intellectual or spiritual alertness, a constant readiness or preparedness to respond to any contingency, however hazardous it might be. One hears the expressions *brahma-tejas* and *kshattra-tejas*, the former suggesting intellectual enthusiasm for truth, and the latter a moral enthusiasm to see the truth prevail.

It is easy to see how victory is a positive value as also decisiveness.

Sattvam (goodness) derives its value from *satyam* (truth) as explained in XVII, 26. There are people who love truth for its own sake, and conform to the requirements of Absolute truth directly or indirectly, the latter through truthful habits to be described in later Chapters. But goodness established in truth transcends the region of mere *gunas* (qualities) which operate within nature only, and reaches pure goodness in itself, thus conforming to the Absolute directly.

[37] *vrishninām vāsudevo 'smi*
pāndavānām dhananjayah

muninam apy aham vyasah
kavinam usana kavih

Of the Vrishnis I am Vasudeva, of the Pandavas, Dhanamjaya (Arjuna), of the recluses also I am Vyasa, of the poets the poet Usana

Before closing the list of values the author refers to himself, and to Krishna, Arjuna and the poet Usana This seems to be by way of putting down the signature of the people concerned or, as in the closing scene of a drama, the appearance of all the main characters together The veil of illusion is here thinned out as much as possible, and spiritual values which are intended throughout the Chapter are revealed directly through the personalities who figure in the work itself

The one principle which may be said to justify the inclusion of these figures in the same verse is that they sail in the same boat as revaluators of ancient wisdom Krishna the leader of a clan called Vrishnis is mentioned first They were a heretical and heterodox group, not of brahmins but of kshattriyas (warriors) and vaishyas (merchant farmers) Vasudeva is the name of Krishna as the son of Vasudeva chief of this clan

Arjuna too is given that unique value which has been the subject of discussion in the whole Chapter, most probably because he was a typical *purva pakshin* (critic taking one side, a sceptic or questioner) in the context of absolutist wisdom By prowess also he excels as a simple warrior, justifying his position even in the *Puranic* (legendary) sense

Vyasa's claims as a representative of the same high value are quite evident since he is the author of this work on the subject The same signature is repeated in xviii, 75 and as the author of the *Brahma Sutras* (aphorisms strung together dealing with the Science of the Absolute) also, which are referred to in xiii, 4, his claims are doubly established

As for Usana the poet, his claim to be included in this list of wisdom revaluators consists in that he did not belong strictly to the orthodox context As a teacher of the Daityas, enemies of the Vedic gods, mentioned in verse 30 he was credited with great wisdom, while at the same time he was a poet who wrote epics rather than *sastras* (text books) on the Science of the Absolute The spirit of these epics cannot have been like that of Homer judging from the fact that Socrates, according to Plato had a poor opinion of Homer, while

here the poet Usana is extolled as a true representative of wisdom

[38] *dando damayatam asmi*
nitir asmi jigishatam
maunam chai va 'smi guhyanam
jnanam jnanavatam aham

Of rulers I am the sceptre, of those who seek victory I am the statesmanship, and also in esoterics I am silence, and of knowers I am knowledge

Even the thin vestige of realism attached to the values enumerated in verse 37 is here removed, and the items are more of the nature of signs, *i e*, figuratively treated as in metonymy The real concrete object loses its importance and its symbol or name or the concept representing it comes into prominence We should take the *lakshanartha* (figurative meaning) instead of the *vachartha* (literal or direct meaning) This is akin to what in medieval scholasticism was known as conceptualism or nominalism

The *danda* (rod or staff) referred to here is the symbol of power rather than merely a big stick It resembles the sceptre of kingly power

There is the subtle element of statesmanship or discretion as the better part of valour, justice or fairness, which is here referred to as *niti*, as an important factor in gaining victory Like good sportsmanship it involves both giving and taking, and these values do not depend on any hard and fast rule The situation has to be watched for the laying down of a particular policy This intuitive quality is the value referred to here

In all matters of esoteric significance here called *guhyah* (secrets) there is place for an all inclusive and subjective attitude of silence which enhances the value of each secret as such A charm which has been rationally analysed loses its flavour or potency as a charm The same applies to the suggestive strength of certain medicines

Finally there is the reference to knowledge itself as a supreme value in man

In the present list the items are more like the ideas of Plato such as beauty justice and so forth The opposite is true of the list given in vii 8-11 where the ontological principles of

existence, and not merely formal or abstract ideas, are enumerated The list there instead of revealing the Absolute, can be looked upon when taken too realistically, as tending to hide the Absolute

[39] *yach cha pi sarvabhutana n*
bijam tad aham arjuna
na tad asti vina yat syan
maya bhutam characharam

And further, what is the seed of all beings that I am, O Arjuna nor is there anything moving or unmoving that can exist without Me

It will be noticed that there is reference to the Absolute as a seed in this verse as in VII 10 In that verse *buddhi* (pure reason) was also referred to while knowledge was referred to in verse 38 here In the seed as a value representing the Absolute we touch the core which is common to both the series in Chapters VII and X The series in VII 8 11 may be said to refer to existential factors while here it is to abstractions tending to be hypostatic

Further, the reference to moving and unmoving entities would seem to suggest that the seed here represents the central or neutral ground between the two sets of entities listed in Chapters VII and X This common core can be no other than the Absolute itself as understood in perfect neutrality

[40] *na nto sti mama divyanam*
vibhutinam paramtapa
esha tu ddestah prokto
vibhuter vistaro maya

There is no end to My divine unique values O Paramtapa (Arjuna) what has been said of these unique values is but indicatory of their (possible) extensive elaboration

This verse is intended to point out that the list of values so far enumerated is not exhaustive There is more left out in it than included The term *uddesatah* (approximative) shows that these values are neither to be taken too realistically or too theoretically They have to be understood in the spirit intended

in the text and should not lead to subtle forms of idolatry or hypostatization.

The word *vistara* (extensive elaboration of detail) suggests not only that the list is incomplete but that it is possible to enter into minuter subdivisions under each of the items enumerated. In this sense we can see that there is no limit to be set for such a process of enumeration of values of the Absolute.

[41] *yad-yad vibhūtimat sattvam*
srimad ūrjitam eva vā
tad-tad evā 'vagachchha tvam
mama tejomsa sambhavam

Whatever entity is unique in perfected value, in grace or in radical strength, understand that to have manifested itself from a (mere fractional) spark of My brilliance.

The word *sattvam* (entity) covers ideological or conceptual entities such as implied in the sun of verse 21 and statesmanship in verse 38. Various presences or holy values have been included side by side with others which do not particularly belong to the context of holiness. Abstract and concrete entities have been included indifferently as representing subtle value-factors.

They are all brought under one sweeping generalization here, under three headings, namely those that are (1) of unique value, (2) those that represent grace, abundance, harmony or order, and (3) anything that stands for vigour, strength, wilful dominating power or a positive attitude in general, deriving validity from truth.

The whole of the Absolute is not required to give that unique touch to values as we cognize them in everyday life. The glory of the Absolute has infinite potency and if we think of it as a brilliant light, only a minute spark of it is all that is necessary to give that uniqueness which is indicated in the entire enumeration listed in this Chapter.

[42] *athavā bahunai 'tena*
kim jnātena tavā 'rjuna
vishtabhyā 'ham idam kritsnam
ekāmsena sthito jagat

But what use is there for you, Arjuna, in this plural istic knowledge? Supporting this whole world by a single fraction (of Myself), I remain still (as ever)

The word *bahuna* (many, numerous, plurality) suggests numerical rather than quantitative vastness The implication is that of the two ways of understanding, namely the unitive and the pluralistic, the unitive comprehends the Absolute more effectively than if we were to think of taking in individually all the endless items which go to make up the notion of the Absolute

The Absolute is, as we have said, a gold coin for which no amount of small change can ever suffice, as Bergson put it Moreover, whatever aspect of the Absolute could be brought under enumeration is but a small fraction of what remains of the Absolute beyond the power of enumeration In other words, whatever we are able to enumerate are factors belonging to the waking world There are other subjective or sub conscious factors which make up the totality of existence, belonging to the two other states of consciousness dream and deep sleep, and also what is often called the fourth state of consciousness, the *turiya*

It is easy to concede therefore as mentioned here that the Absolute remains unaffected, quite without diminution in principle, after it has supported the visible world with but a spark or fraction

In fact it is in the light of the well known peace invocation, where plenitude taken away from plenitude leaves plenitude as a remainder (*aum purnna madah purnna medam purnnat purnam udachyate, purnasya purnamadaya purna meva vasishyate*— Plenitude is all that is invisible Plenitude is all that is visible Plenitude was born out of plenitude When plenitude is absorbed into plenitude plenitude alone remains) that we should understand here the meaning of the word *sthitah* (I remain) as the Absolute remaining without suffering any quantitative decrease even though supporting the visible universe with a fraction of itself

This Chapter read side by side with the next Chapter, where a multiplicity of divine holy or sacred entities come to be considered from Arjuna s Samjaya s or Krishna s own standpoint, would seem at first sight to have such a miscellaneous character as would perhaps give the impression that they have more of a religious than a philosophical import

Although this would apply to a greater extent to the next Chapter, and more especially with those parts of it which are attributed to Arjuna or Samjaya who are religious minded characters, a close examination of the contents of both Chapters reveals that there is no deflection from the philosophical approach to the subject of the Absolute

This last verse of the present Chapter brings back the discussion to a full recognition of the philosophical import of the notion of the Absolute, after the long digression in the enumeration of specific values Taking the Chapter as a whole without this particular digression, it has a status on a par with Chapter IX, especially when we note in verse 4 that the Absolute understood here comprises equally both existence and non existence

The spirit in which this Chapter is conceived is therefore not a religious one and this remark applies equally to the next Chapter where the same kind of digression is seen perhaps more elaborately marked We shall see how even the next Chapter conforms to the requirements of a strict science or a philosophy of the Absolute when we adhere closely to the main development of the theme in the words of Krishna himself without being carried away by what will be incidentally mentioned through the intermediary characters of a Samjaya or an Arjuna

We have only to examine the words of Krishna at the end of the next Chapter (XI, 54 55) to see the continuity of the theme of the Absolute in spite of these inevitable digressions which have been purposely introduced by the author to bring out the specific potent or positive aspects of the notion of the Absolute

The position at the end of the present Chapter could therefore be summed up as follows ethics, religion and a way of life in general which would cure Arjuna of his abnormal attitude in the midst of danger are still to be described in the various Chapters that follow The enumeration of *vibhutis* (perfections) in this Chapter only supplies the simple basis for the superstructure which is still to be erected so that the Gita teaching could do positive good in curing abnormality and establishing the spiritual aspirant represented by Arjuna on the proper progressive path of a life of wisdom The enumerations of items here is therefore to be understood as being related to three kinds of life values (1) those in which the forward flowing urge of the Absolute principle is evidenced

(*vibhutimat*), (2) those in which the neutral balancing of neutral tendencies leads to grace, goodness or bounty in everyday life (*srimat*) and (3) those in which the radical, stable, valid or lasting aspect of Absolute truth or reality (*urjitam*) is evidenced In all three cases, values are the resultants of the neutralization of opposing tendencies in the process of flux or becoming characteristic of reality as a whole tending to produce perfect, specific models of value, each unique in its own category or sub category, of which there could be a great number

ity srimad bhagavadgitasupanishatsu brahmavidyayam
yogasastre srikrishnarjunasamvade
vibhutiyogo nama dasamo dhyayah

Thus ends in the Upanishads of the Songs of God, in the Science of the Wisdom of the Absolute in the Dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna the Tenth Chapter entitled Unitive Recognition of Positive Values

CHAPTER XI

THE UNITIVE VISION OF THE ABSOLUTE

Visvarupa Darsana Yoga

BETWEEN this Chapter and the last there is a delicate epistemological distinction In the last Chapter it was taken for granted that there were certain unique values expressed through actual entities belonging to the visible or at least to the conceptual world They thus had a status of their own

Starting with Chapter vii it was an empirical or ontological approach from which the earth at one end of a series and egoism at the other end, were reviewed In Chapter ix these items or categories were seen further sublimated in verses 17-19 in terms of personalized aspects of the Absolute In Chapter x again the Absolute was the origin of all the entities involved Personal endowments and qualities of contemplative life were referred to in x 4 5 The absolutist touch in persons or entities was recognized indirectly through somewhat vague generalities such as perfections, graces or valid truths in x, 19 39 The approach through the ontological aspects of the Absolute did not however, really make the notion of the Absolute clear enough Naturally, therefore, Arjuna is left with a feeling of dissatisfaction, and here he takes the initiative and begins this Chapter with an express desire to satisfy himself with a more definite view of the Absolute The answer to this desire is in the form of a universal vision of the Absolute which occupies the greater portion of this Chapter

We find three different sets of descriptions of the vision presented in this Chapter Samjaya comes in again, and as an impartial reporter of events he takes a cold and matter-of-fact view of the vision from his own standpoint, somewhat cosmologically after the style of the *Purusha Sukta* of the *Rig* Veda There the cosmic man has innumerable hands and heads In Samjaya s picture the element of awe is not predominant On the other hand there is a conventional complacency and childish references to perfumes and jewels

Secondly there is Arjuna s standpoint most of which is in a special metre attuned to a note of religious exaltation, which

characterizes his whole attitude It is coloured *more by theology* than by cosmology It ranges from the conventional starting point of a Vishnu known to mythology, through various other forms of religious exaggeration, to the desire to return (in verse 46) to the same conventional picture of a mild and soothing Vishnu

Thirdly, running through these two varieties we hear the *steadying voice of Krishna himself referring to his own absolutist* nature which, although free from the cosmological or theological presuppositions or prejudices he attributes an even *higher value to his own innate spiritual supremacy, than what* is implied in the more conditioned vision of the other two Krishna points out clearly in verses 48 and 52 that the vision here is beyond the reach of all conventional religious notions hitherto known in spite of its being a marvel as he says in verse 6 Moreover according to him it is a vision to be seen only through the eye of yoga (verse 8) It is given to the contemplative only Whether Arjuna availed himself of this offer is not reported by Samjaya

According to Krishna in verse 7 the vision is not a static one There is no fixed mould into which the vision is supposed to fit The man who has the vision can see whatever he desires to see according to his own conditionings Without conditioning that is to say in the case of a man without religious or other prejudices it is to be inferred that there is no vision, or that the vision is of no importance The vision vanishes and instead we have a person who is capable of making a proper distinction *between the field and the knower* of the field and does not therefore confuse or mistake *one for the other which is the important* philosophic subject dealt with in Chapter XIII Chapter XII is apologetic in favour of those who are unable to rise to such a philosophic state

The vision in this Chapter thus passes from conditioned ideas of a cosmological person *through a vision conceived* in theological terms and attains finally to the full status of a positive picture of the Absolute in terms of an imperative force of becoming which reaches tragic heights

Arjuna uvacha

[1] *madanugrahaya paramam*
guhyam adhyatmasamjnitam

yat tvayo 'ktam vachas tena
moho 'yam vigato mama

Arjuna said:
By that speech which has been spoken by You out of favour for me, the highest secret known as pertaining to the Self, this, my confusion, has vanished.

The initiative passes again to Arjuna, and he recalls that it was a special favour conferred on him in the two previous Chapters, wherein it was Krishna who took the initiative in instructing his disciple. At the opening verse of each of these Chapters we noticed the attitude of full adoption and of favour reflected in the words addressed to Arjuna. In Chapter IX as one free from disadoption or uncarping in respect of the teaching, Arjuna does not mistrust any more, and therefore Krishna is willing to open his heart and confide in him deeper and more secret aspects of the wisdom that he represents. At the beginning of Chapter X we noticed that the confidence gained further ground. Krishna is there positively interested in the welfare of Arjuna and therefore in teaching him once again.

This present verse refers backwards to what has been dealt with in the last two Chapters. Krishna's initiative is definitely referred to here and that is sufficient justification for us to believe that the reference is to the two preceding Chapters. The matter developed in previous Chapters generally could come under the title of *adhyātma* (pertaining to the Self).

Arjuna says now that such was the subject-matter of what Krishna has just finished discussing. We are therefore led to think that the two central Chapters contain the essential teaching on the Self which the Gita intends to present to the reader. It is true that a superficial scanning of their contents does not make this fact particularly evident, but in dealing with these Chapters we have taken sufficient care already to indicate how the subject of the Self is implied throughout them both. It is not an elaborate or systematic treatise on the Self that we should expect in these Chapters, but a treatment of the subject of the Self in that neutral dispassionate and absolutist way. It is this which gives these Chapters the status of dealing with the Absolute in a way most fitting to the subject of the Self. It is in this sense that

Arjuna s reference here to the secret Science of the Self should be understood as having just been declared by Krishna

Arjuna further adds significantly that his own *moha* (con fusion) has been dispelled by the teaching in the two previous Chapters This further confirms our view that these two central Chapters contain the teaching of the Gita at least in a form which would dispel confusion on the subject In xviii 73, we notice that Arjuna repeats the statement with the additional remark that he has not only come out of con fusion but has gained his memory The teaching of the Gita must accordingly serve other disciples like Arjuna to dispel their confusion also in the first place, and then to reorientate their own personalities in terms of memory

The part covered by the Gita so far has to do with the first mentioned purpose, and what is to follow may therefore be legitimately looked upon as having the second purpose in view as we shall try to confirm as we proceed with these Chapters which constitute the latter half of the book

[2] *bhavapyayau hi bhutanam*
srutau vistaraso maya
tvattah kamalapattraksha
mahatmyam api cha vyayam

The origin and dissolution of beings have been heard by me in elaboration from You, O Lotus-petal eyed as also Your unexpended greatness

A confident and more intimate attitude on the part of Arjuna towards Krishna is implied here especially by the appellation *kamalapattraksha* (O Lotus petal eyed) This is to be contrasted with his own attitude after he has seen Krishna in his universal form in verses 35 and 42 later However, normal relations are again established by verse 51 The intermediate phases of Arjuna s exaltation trance or spiri tual agony are implied in the words of Arjuna himself in the rest of the Chapter or through the report of Samjaya

As seen in this Chapter the personality of Krishna ranges from the most intimate or ordinary human form of a relative and friend of Arjuna to one where it touches impersonal heights of transcendentalism as near to the Absolute as could be as it were from this side of reality Before coming to such a presentation there is here a backward reference

to the appraisal of the Absolute as envisaged in the two previous Chapters In IX, 4-10 a picture of the Absolute was already given The Absolute was referred to both as a source as well as an emanating principle in IX, 8 In X, 20, the Absolute is not only the beginning but the end of all beings These various references to origin or end are what justifies the reference here to *bhavāpyayau* (origin and dissolution). Though these processes are aspects which seem to contradict each other as phases of a centralized process of pure becoming they are attributes of the same Absolute Chapter X made an attempt to present a picture of the Absolute under various categories, each separate from the other, and all belonging to items widely apart and lacking in any space time unity

A vestige of duality suggested by the dual number employed in the word *srutau* ("the two" have been heard) may be accepted in the sense that the origin and end are not identical These have to be treated unitively and such treatment has already been attempted in parts of the previous Chapters (Cf IX, 17 ff and X, 2, 14, 19 ff)

Thus, taking verses 1 and 2 of the present Chapter, we find that there is a summary of the title, subject matter and characteristics of the two previous Chapters, summed up by the author himself This is done with a view to contrast such contents with what is to follow, where the Absolute is to be confronted in a more positive, unitive and objectively conceived manner

The actualization of the Absolute might have its limitations and drawbacks in a purely philosophical sense, but philosophy is not limited to merely idealistic abstractions When it does not become too anthropomorphic or puerile, or a localized and temporarily fixed vision, such a visualization of the Absolute need not necessarily, merely because of definiteness of treatment, fall outside the scope of a respectable form of philosophizing The philosophical character of the vision of this Chapter will be evident to anyone capable of penetrating behind the literary device consciously used by the author

In fact, when we examine minutely the implications of the vision of Arjuna as meant by Vyasa or as seen through the direct words of Krishna, the charge that this Chapter represents a childish or very ordinary form of religious theophany, falls to the ground Arjuna in fact reveals himself as a full-fledged philosopher in verse 18 here The difference between

this Chapter and the two previous ones is the question confronting us in the present verse

Hitherto the Absolute was looked upon through what may be called pure becoming, non localized in time and space In this Chapter, however, Arjuna feels the need for appraising the Absolute in a more positive, fixed or actual manner Krishna's own personality has been tacitly treated as representing the Absolute from the very beginning of this work. One is not charged of puerile anthropomorphism when one uses such an expression as "the body politic" The more positive a notion becomes, the more it may be said to be conceived in terms of actuality in location and time Making allowances therefore for such considerations and limitations, we come in this Chapter to a section wherein the Absolute is seen as a vision involving a superior person who in turn represents the Absolute

[3] *evam etad yatha 'ttha tvam*
atmanam paramesvara
drashtum ichchhami te rupam
aisvaram purushottama

So it is as You have said Yourself, supreme Lord,
I desire to see Your divine Form, O supreme Person

This verse repeats the idea of x, 15, to call our attention once again to the fact that the Absolute is best seen from its own standpoint To objectify the Absolute, whether concretely or through abstract concepts, can only be indirect The vision that follows in this Chapter is therefore to some extent discredited, but presented as one to be understood with the allowance for the limitations as implied here

When Arjuna is said to see the form of Krishna we have to take it that Arjuna sympathises with Krishna to such an extent as to identify himself with Krishna and thus to see the vision as Krishna would see it himself An externalized vision is not what is meant here Verse 8 later implies the same principle of sympathetic intuition when it refers to the divine eye

The express desire of Arjuna to have a vision such as many religious people naturally believe in or claim to have had in their lives, lends its plausibility to support Vyasa's inclusion of a vision of this kind in the Gita a vision which might

at least be normal in a *purana* (legend) The request to see the *rupam aisvaram* (form divine) comes from Arjuna who is theologically conditioned, but this request is not granted by Krishna, as we have pointed out It is neither a merely philosophical description nor a religious vision which is given in this Chapter Concessions are made both ways and the vision is both awe inspiring and real

[4] *manyase yadi tach chhakyam*
maya drashtum iti prabho
yogesvara tato me tvam
darsaya tmanam avyayam

If You think that it is possible for me to see it, O Powerful One, then do You, O Yoga Master, show Me Your never decreasing Self

Arjuna here refers to the vision he is about to have In the context of religion and mysticism in general, various kinds of visions have been described Some of them depend on the special psychic state of the contemplative himself, or the type of mysticism he represents Well known mystics in the Christian and Sufi worlds present a variety which has been the subject matter of study on the part of writers such as William James From quietism and even erotic mysticism, through practical religious works to the heights of ecstasy and even agony, they present a vast range of possibilities in the world of spiritual experience

On the other hand special circumstances may be said to evoke certain states of mind which may be called exalted states of ecstasy These also have their corresponding visions A highly mature philosopher can have his own version of a a vision which can be treated both as an allegory or a true vision in the actual sense

On the Indian soil there is a tendency for the religious and the philosophical visions to meet, and one is capable of being interpreted in terms of the other In the vision which is to follow we should notice it is neither the subject who feels the ecstasy nor the person inducing the ecstasy is totally responsible for the vision Arjuna asks for a vision but whether the vision is possible for a human being is still a matter of doubt with him as he expresses here

It is again significant that Krishna is addressed as a Lord of Yoga A yogi is one capable of assuming whatever form he likes In other words he is one capable of sliding upwards or downwards in the contemplative scale of values represented in his own personality He is not statically fixed to any one type of personal expression, but enjoys a certain degree of freedom

The request here by Arjuna is that Krishna should present *himself as the One Self incapable of suffering any decrease* or deterioration What we should particularly notice is that the vision is a double sided phenomenon, by request on one side and consent on the other, instead of being of the nature of a one sided personal weakness Samjaya is the mildest visionary Arjuna is capable of a higher degree of exaltation, and Krishna himself, as representing the Absolute, goes beyond what is understandable or pleasing to either The full implications of Krishna's own absolutism are left beyond the reach of not only Arjuna himself but that of most persons who have hitherto tried to visualize the Absolute

Sribhagavan uvacha

[5] *pasyame partha rupani*
sataso 'tha sahasrasah
nanavidhani divyani
nanavarnakritini cha

Krishna said
Behold, O Partha (Arjuna), My forms, by hundreds and thousands, various in kind, divine, and of varied colours and shapes

Except for what is implied in the expression *divyani* (divine) there is nothing in this verse which requires any special vision at all Coloured, therefore, by this quality called divine, which merely suggests a contemplative value, the vision instead of starting with any hair raising item, refers rather to ordinary physical realities such as multiplicity of forms and varieties therein, and the colourful nature of the phenomenal world as seen by the ordinary man In referring to all of them together in generalized terms there is to be recognized however a mildly philosophical approach.

[6] *pasya 'dityan vasun rudran*
asvinau marutas tatha
bahuny adrishtapurvani
pasya 'scharyani bharata

Behold the Ādityas, the Vasus, the Rudras, the two Asvins, and also the Maruts, behold many marvels never seen before O Bharata (Arjuna)

The contemplative vision rises one degree higher here. Instead of phenomenal aspects that every man can see, here are ranged certain values which are familiar as they have once been covered in the last Chapter The sun (Āditya) as the largest of luminaries having a direct influence on human happiness is mentioned first in this series The series passes on to include other entities known to the Vedic world which tend to become more hypostatic in character, rather than remaining purely phenomenal The element of marvel or wonder is correspondingly heightened one degree

These marvels described as *adrishtapurvani* (never seen before) gives us the hint to what is more explicitly stated in verses 52 and 53 later The claim implied here is that the teaching of the Gita is a revaluation and a restatement beyond what has been accomplished by anyone previously In other words a more thorough going absolutism is represented in the Gita

[7] *iha 'ikastham jagat kritsnam*
pasya 'dya sacharacharam
mama dehe gudakesa
yach cha 'nyad drashtum ichchhasi

Now behold here in My body, O Gudakesa (Arjuna), the whole world, including the static and the dynamic unitively established, and whatever else you desire to see

In the last Chapter where unique values were enumerated, Arjuna was required to arrive at the notion of the Absolute indirectly through a variety of examples chosen from a vaster range distributed all over space and time or as contained in the mind itself Here in this verse Krishna points out that there is no need of such distribution in the vision Arjuna

is going to have The vision is localized in Krishna's own body, *of course symbolically understood In the last Chapter* the recognition was pluralistic and partial, but here it becomes a more complete or centralized, unitive vision

The ambivalent aspects involving static and dynamic values, here comprised under the expression *sacharacharam* (both static and dynamic) *are to be viewed as if brought* into a central, unitive focus *ihai 'kastham* (here, standing as one) Arjuna is further asked not to limit himself to what is given only by such values, but to extend his imagination if he likes, to whatever else he is capable of visualizing

Therefore though localized and fixed, the vision is fully credited with its own dynamic aspects This latitude or concession kindly made in favour of the visionary really amounts to calling upon him to be more a philosopher than a visionary By implication this suggests that no vision however superior is to be made into a fetish Even modern physics gives us an expanding universe full of indeterminism and not one that is statically fixed

[8] *na tu mam sakyase drashtum*
anenai 'va svachakshusha
divyam dadami te chakshuh
pasya me yogam aisvaram

But if you are unable to see Me with this your (human) eye, I give you a divine eye Behold My sovereign yoga

What is objectively divine evidently presupposes its counterpart which is the capacity in the subject to recognize divinity This law of mutual accord is further confirmed here, over and above what was implied with reference to the divine in verse 5

The "divine eye' here may be said to be that capacity to recognize spiritual values but because the vision is enclosed in the brackets, as it were, of the first degree or Samjaya literary device, so there is no need to take it as seriously as the descriptions of the vision belonging to the third degree or *samvada* (discussion) order Mere 'human eyes', however are too weak even to see the continuous flow of events in time They can comprise only an empirical view of reality consisting of disjunct events A vision of

creative becoming or flux is given only to the yogic or divine eye It is the intuitive element implied in such a vision which is called *jnanachakshush* (wisdom eye) elsewhere (*e g*, XIII, 34 and XV, 10)

Samjaya uvacha

[9] *evam uktva tato rajan*
mahayogesvaro harih
darsayam asa parthaya
paramam rupam aisvaram

Samjaya said
Having thus spoken, then, O King (Dhritarashtra), Hari (Krishna) the great Yoga Master showed to Partha (Arjuna) the supreme Godly Form

This verse begins the section in which Samjaya again reports to King Dhritarashtra what happened Samjaya is essentially a religious man and besides referring to Krishna as Hari, which is a name for Vishnu, he looks upon the vision of the universal form itself through his own theological conditionings as expressed in the word *aisvaram* (divine, godly, pertaining to Isvara or God) Isvara is a theological concept belonging to the relativist and not to the absolutist viewpoint, which latter is proper to Vedanta

As a mere reporter in the *Puranic* or epic setting of the Gita this position of Samjaya is only to be expected But even as a mere reporter we find such expressions as *maha yogesvara* (the great Yoga Master) and *paramam* (supreme) In effect these words lift the report above the merely epic or *Puranic* context towards a Vedantic status This is confirmed by verse 12 later where Krishna is described without any conventional religious or theological reservations But even here the limitations of the epic outlook are not altogether absent as the reference to a thousand suns is not the same as referring to innumerable suns The first degree (Samjaya) device is responsible for the conservative tinge that still remains

[10] *aneka vaktra nayanam*
aneka bhuta darsanam
aneka divyabharanam
divyanekodyatayudham

With many mouths and eyes with many marvellous aspects with many divine ornaments with many divine weapons held aloft

This verse is reminiscent of the cosmic man familiarly known as the *Purusha Sukta* in the *Rig* Veda (ix, 4 90) The Vedic conditioning of Samjaya is sufficiently evident here, although in the next verse we can definitely distinguish tendencies belonging to the counterblast to Ved sm in the iconographic language which has distinctly characterized South Indian spirituality (see *The Word of the Guru* ch xvi P Natarajan Bangalore) Even in the present verse the reference to ornaments and weapons is more iconographic than purely Vedic

[11] *divya malyambara dharam*
divya gandhanulepanam
sarvascharyamayam devam
anantam visvatomukham

wearing divine garlands and vestures anointed with divine perfumes and unguents a God representing sheer marvel without end universally facing

Notice here that the element of awe is not yet evident It is rather a ben gn and even luxury loving god of ritual stic worship who is portrayed The universal touch implied in a truly contemplative attitude comes into evidence only in the references to the *ascharya* (marvel) *anantam* (without end) and *visvatomukham* (universally facing) The latter occurred before in x 33 Taken altogether the vision even accord ng to the report of Samjaya does not fall short of an Absolute dign f ed enough for Vedanta although cosmological and theological lim tations are still evident

[12] *d vi suryasahasrasya*
bl aved yogapad utthita
yadi bhah sadrisi sa syad
bhasas tasya mahatmanah

[13] *tatrai kastl am jagat kritsnam*
pravibl aktam anekadha

apasyad devadevasya
sarire pandavas tada

If the splendour of a thousand suns were to rise together in the sky that might resemble the splendour of that great Soul

There the Pandava (Arjuna) then beheld the whole world, divided into many kinds, unitively established in the body of the God of gods

These verses supplement the description of the cosmic man in the version of Samjaya Though still sober and not given to exaggerations or specialized elaboration, these traits that necessarily characterize a full cosmic vision are contained even in this description in what might be called a nuclear form Verse 12 in particular, in referring to the splendour of a thousand suns, uses the favourite simile of light which has always represented wisdom The comforting imagery of the previous verses is discarded in favour of more positive aspects such as the brilliance which penetrates every object In spite of being a light, the Being is still referred to as *mahatma* (great soul) which keeps the vision from being understood too diffusedly or as a mere abstraction

The manifold parts of a cosmic vision referred to in verse 13 could be the three worlds *bhur*, *bhuvar* and *svar* familiar to the *gayatri* prayer of the brahmins, or they could be the fourteen worlds known to tradition, seven below reaching down to *Patala* the lowest, and seven above rising to Brahma's world or *Satya loka* (world of Truth) where there is eternal life Intermediate *lokas* (worlds) belong to other spiritual entities such as *rishis* (seers) A serial or graded cosmos is here suggested, consisting of the abodes of the most trivial of creation to that of the highest Brahma A contemplative scale of values is here implied

The reference to the body of Krishna is in the same sense as we have pointed out under verse 7 The localization does not detract from the philosophical status of the vision, as each vision must be necessarily limited by the power to see on the part of the subject and the power to manifest on the part of the object (the Absolute)

The expression *devadeva* (God of gods) ought to absolve even the vision of Samjaya s report from any charge of being

merely theological, although a markedly theological outlook was his natural starting point The epithet is suggestive of *purushottama* (the most high Spirit) elaborated in xv, 18-19

[14] *tatah sa visvamayavishto*
hrishtaroma dhanamjayah
pranamya sirasa devam
kritanjalir abhashata

> Then he, Dhanamjaya (Arjuna) struck with amazement with his hair standing on end reverently bowing his head to the God and with joined palms, said

In the construction of this Chapter we should notice there is a graded continuity in the vision irrespective of the person or character through whose words the vision itself happens to be described Arjuna s own vision follows naturally on the vision reported by Samjaya, and Samjaya s own mood blends with it, except for the difference here stated that Arjuna was very excited The tendency to religious or spiritual exaggeration is therefore only to be expected in the description that *Arjuna himself gives* which now follows

The reference to *hrishtaroma* (the hair standing on end) being a physiological symptom of exaltation, was referred to already in I, 29 Whenever a situation overwhelms Arjuna or is too much for him, this symptom appears

The familiar attitude of a devotee is reflected in Arjuna here as Samjaya sees him but Arjuna himself on recovery from his exalted state is seen to establish normal relations with Krishna once again (as at the beginning of this Chapter) in verse 51 He apologises however in verse 42 for any possible irreverence shown to his friend Krishna Between these three attitudes of Arjuna revealed in the same Chapter the intelligent reader is free to surmise for himself what Arjuna s proper attitude actually was in keeping with his status of a *purva pakshin* (anterior sceptic or questioner disciple) in the context of wisdom, or of a mere supplicant in a more traditional or religious sense

The retention of the word *devam* (god) in this last verse of Samjaya's reporting indicates the theological limitation to which his version of the vision as a whole is to be taken as subject

Arjuna uvācha

[15] *pasyāmi devams tava deva dehe*
sarvams tathā bhūta visesha samghān
brahmānam isam kamalāsanastham
rishims cha sarvān uragāms cha divyan

Arjuna said
I see the gods, O God, in Your body, and all specific groups of beings, Brahmā the Lord, established on his lotus-seat and all seers (*rishis*) and divine serpents

Arjuna covers the same cosmological and theological entities or groups in his own way, after the same has been covered twice already in the words of Krishna and Samjaya The elemental or phenomenal expressions are viewed as belonging to specific groups or categories in the first instance. To recognize specific groups is the first step towards a philosophic generalization which is implicit in a contemplative vision of the whole universe A plant or an animal of a particular species has its own status in reality

Hence the reference in the phrase *bhūta visesha samghān* (specific groups of beings) is legitimately of a contemplative order. Contemplation does not tend to abolish specific manifested realities, but by grouping them in a serial order of importance, gives them their legitimate place in a scale of values ranging from the most ordinary to the highest spiritually known to man. Ontological aspects are therefore not omitted but transcended

The reference to Brahmā seated on a lotus, savours of the favourite theological-mythological imagery of Hinduism He is the first god of creation A lotus with a thousand petals has been the favourite symbol of creation both in Hinduism and Buddhism Brahma therefore represents a unique or specialized manifestation of a cosmic value The reference to such a god after referring to groups of actualities is therefore quite in place The lotus seat of Brahmā is on the actual side, while Brahmā himself may be considered as lifted up into a world of contemplative values

The *rishis* (seer-sages) as wise men have a superior value to mere created things however perfect

The value of serpents in the contemplative context perhaps consists in their representing time or eternity. The world of serpents is often spoken of as belonging to a superseded

nether-world of spirituality, and thus may be said to cover all retrospective values generally Their divinity consists in their being included in the contemplative scale of values here

The first mentioned in the series here is *devas* (gods) suggestive of all the gods of the Vedas This is counterbalanced by the reference to the divine serpents. Vedic gods represent the foreground of the Indian spiritual scene, while the superseded *nāga* (serpent) worship belongs to the remote background.

[16] *aneka bahudara vaktra netram*
pasyami tvām sarvato 'nantarupam
na 'ntam na madhyam na punas tava 'dim
pasyami visvesvara visvarupa

I see You of boundless form on every side, with multitudinous arms, stomachs, mouths and eyes, neither Your end, nor Your middle, nor Your beginning do I see, O Lord of the Universe, O Universal Form !

The difference of treatment of the notions of the Absolute here and in the previous Chapter becomes clear in this verse. While in x, 2 and 32, the Absolute was viewed from the angle of a process of becoming and considered as a source, beginning, middle and end, each distinguishable, here in Arjuna's vision, these three aspects of the process tend to be abolished Samjaya's picture in verse 10 earlier is accentuated on the same lines here to the point of infinity instead of being merely numerical The transition from the relative to the Absolute must be noted When a number becomes too great it tends to be in effect the same as infinity A mild relativist vision conforming to general verities, as that of Samjaya, when intensified as seen here leads to a finalized notion of the Absolute represented by Krishna s version of his own absolutist glory mentioned in this Chapter and elsewhere

[17] *kiritinam gadinam chakrinam cha*
tejorasim sarvato diptimantam
pasyami tvam durnirikshyam samantad
diptanalarkadyutim aprameyam

I behold You with diadem, mace and discus, glowing everywhere as a mass of light, hard to look at, everywhere blazing like fire and sun unpredicable

There is reference here to the familiar form of Vishnu of Indian mythology with diadem, mace and discus If Arjuna already sees Vishnu in the universal form presented here, it would seem incongruous for him again to pray, as he does, for a vision of the same as stated in verse 46 There is perhaps a minimal and maximal degree in the exaltation implied in the vision The vision is not one to be conceived as the product of a single uniformly continued state of mind The first reference to the figure of Vishnu which he sees must be taken as marking a minimal degree of exaltation The exaltation becomes too much for him as it proceeds By the time the vision develops to what is represented in verse 14 it gains the character of an agony rather than one pleasant or sufferable It can therefore be thought that the second reference to Vishnu is by way of a request to regain normality

Though a conventional static figure, Vishnu corresponds to a stage in a scale of values representing the Absolute Hence his inclusion in the vision of Arjuna, who is himself conditioned by the conventions of his time, is not to be considered out of place

Further we notice here that it is a dazzling Vishnu rather than a beneficent godhead His glory transcends the conventional relativist limits usually associated with Vishnu as a beneficent god

The epithet *aprameyam* (unpredicable) gives the hallmark of philosophy even to this verse which seems to stem from a theological Vishnu The verses that follow accentuate the same tendency much more specifically There is no reference here to Vishnu as one of the *avatars* which is an idea later to the Gita as Prof Lacombe of Paris has pointed out The Bhagavata partiality for the *vyuha* (distributive arrangement) theory of four divine persons of whom Vasudeva is the highest, is also absent here (cf p 26, *L'Absolu selon le Vedanta*)

[18] *tvam aksharam paramam veditavyam*
tvam asya visvasya param nidhanam
tvam avyayah sasvata dharma gopta
sanatana tvam purusho mato me

You are the Imperishable the Supreme (that is) to be known, You are the ultimate Basis of this universe, You are the unexpended and everlasting Custodian of (natural) law, You are the immemorial Person, I believe

Here there is a mixed reference to widely differing values from the philosophical and ethical to the cosmological, re miniscent of the later style of the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* where notions such as *dharma* (naturally right law) are treated side by side with merely ontological references

As the metre itself indicates a state of high exaltation and synthetic vision is reflected here, hardly capable of being analysed

The expression *veditavyam* (to be known) implies a far off philosophical goal of understanding, while *nidhanam* (basis) hearkens backwards to the ontological aspect of the same reality Both extremes are further described as either *paramam* (supreme) or *param* (ultimate) The ontological ultimate coincides with the teleological goal

The ternal moral conscience and the primordial man also come together in the second half of this verse, marking the height of philosophical vision of which Arjuna is capable

The expression *mato me* (my conviction is this or, I believe) indicates that Arjuna himself takes a sure stand here He is no more in doubt When we remember that the Gita finally recommends the discarding of all *dharma* (law) in xviii, 66, Arjuna s reference to moral value here may be considered as belonging to a merely human context

[19] *anadimadhyantam anantaviryam*
anantabahum sasisuryanetram
pasyami tvam diptahutasavaktram
svatejasa visvam idam tapantam

I see You without beginning middle or end of never ending force of numberless arms having moon and sun for eyes Your face like a lit fire of sacrifice burning this universe with Your own radiance

Here we have another confection in which different con cepts are mixed together to give a new flavour to a revalued spirituality approximating to the absolutist vision of the Gita as a whole

The first line is a repetition of the idea of the urge of pure becoming knowing neither middle beginning nor end The second line suggests the cosmic *purusha* (spirit) with sun and moon for eyes The third line is taken from the context of

Vedic sacrifices, the brightness of which is a moment in the eternal present The fourth line suggests the whole universe as being consumed by this radiant glow of the Absolute

In philosophic content this picture is not different from Krishna's own version in verse 32

[20] *dyavaprithivyor idam antaram hi*
vyaptam tvayai 'kena disas cha sarvah
drishtva 'dbhutam rupam ugram tave 'dam
lokatrayam pravyathitam mahatman

The space between heaven earth and the intermediate realm is pervaded by You alone, as also the quarters (directions), having seen this wonder ful, terrible form of Yours, the three worlds are in distress, O Great Self

The different levels into which earth and heaven and the space between are familiarly divided, as being populated by different grades of spiritual entities, ranging between simple humans to *devas* (divinities), are here telescoped unitively into a more comprehensive vision with a tragic touch about it The Vedas had the more comforting picture in which souls were described as floating up to heaven or returning to earth by a slow accumulation of merit This naif picture has been deprecatingly alluded to in ix 20 and 21

The present unitive though tragic picture is in keeping with the spirit of the Gita and with Krishna s own idea of the Absolute as seen at the end of the present Chapter

The Absolute is for the first time represented by the term *pravyathitam* (distressed) as suggestive of unhappiness or tragedy This term also suggests a Rudra or a Siva more than a Vishnu

[21] *ami hi tvam surasamgha visanti*
kechid bhitah pranjalayo grinanti
s asti 'ty uktva maharshisiddhasamghah
stuvanti tvam stutibhih pushkalabhih

[22] *rudradityа vasavo ye cha sadhya*
visve svinau marutas cho 'shmapas cha
gandharva yakshasura siddha samgha
vikshante tvam vismitas chai 'va sarve

Into You enter those hosts of the Suras (gods), some in fear of You mutter with joined palms, bands of great *rishis* (seer sages) and Perfected Ones (*siddhas*) hail You with the cry "May it be well!" and praise You with resounding hymns

The Rudras, Ādityas, Vasus and Sadhyas, Visvas and the two Asvins, Maruts and Ūshmapās, hosts of Gandharvas, Yakshas, Asuras and Siddhas, all gaze at You, wonderstruck

Different orders of spiritual beings, some purely Vedic and others belonging to other contexts, including that of ancestor-worship—the Ūshmapas being a class of *pitris* or ancestors—are all brought together here as praising the Absolute In verse 22 even the Asuras, the demonic enemies of the Vedic gods, the opposites of the Suras of verse 21, are not omitted

When a god is to be praised in India, it is usual to heighten the effect by reference to sages like Narada and others who come to worship him The gods are thus given a revalued status Following the same method here, the status of the Absolute implied in the vision of Arjuna is said to have the approbation of all kinds of spiritual entities without distinction It is the special privilege of *maharshis* (great seer sages) alone to welcome the vision with *svasti* (May it be well!) Others either worship or watch with fear or amazement

[23] *rupam mahat te bahuvaktranetram*
mahabaho bahubahurupadam
bahudaram bahudamshtrakaralam
drishtva lokah pravyathitas tatha ham

Seeing Your great form, with many mouths and eyes, O Mighty armed One (Krishna), of many arms, thighs and feet, with many stomachs, with many terrible teeth, the worlds are distressed, as also myself

Beginning with mouths and eyes, here the cosmic man is again portrayed from top to bottom The object here is evidently to refer to his terrible destructive aspect The reference to terrible teeth in the third line is evidence of this intention In verse 25 the teeth themselves are compared to

flames. In the irresistible process of becoming, all specific entities have to be absorbed and lost. Instead of stating this philosophic verity in plain language, here is the allegorical representation of a cosmic man with all his limbs, each of which represents a particular grade in the hierarchy of transformed values in the cosmic process. The distress at the same time affects both Arjuna on the one side and the cosmos on the other side. This is a subtle way of suggesting a parallelism between the subjective and the objective aspects of the vision. Contemplative methodology tends to minimize the distinction between subject and object.

[24] *nabhahsprisam diptam anekakavarnam*
vyāttānanam diptavisālanetram
drishtvā hi tvām pravyathitāntarātmā
dhritim na 'vindāmi samam cha vishno

[25] *damshtrākarālāni cha te mukhāni*
drishtvai 'va kālānalasamnibhāni
diso na jāne na labhe cha sarma
prasīda devesa jagannivāsa

On seeing You touching the sky, shining in many a colour with mouths wide open, with large fiery eyes, my inmost self intensely distressed, I find neither courage nor control, O All-pervading One.

Having seen Your mouths fearful with teeth like time's devouring flames, I lose my spatial bearings and find no joy; be gracious, O Lord of Gods, Container of the world!

These verses continue the picture of the cosmic man with more subtle touches than in the last verse. Visual aspects and the light element gain prominence. The teeth are compared to flames. The epithet Vishnu in verse 24 is used perhaps as in verse 30 in the sense of all-pervading as the word means, and need not suggest a deity.

The overpowering effect of the vision on Arjuna is clearly stated. This must be due to the highly positive character of the representation—as scraping the sky, rainbow-coloured, and then the flamelike teeth spreading everywhere—all of which portrays an accelerated process of becoming, as the

term *kalanalasamnibham* (resembling the fire of time) suggests.

[26] *ami cha tvam dhritarāshtrasya putrah*
sarve sahai 'va 'vanipalasamghaih
bhishmo dronah sutaputras tatha 'sau
sahā 'smadiyair api yodhamukhyaih

[27] *vaktrani te tvaramana visanti*
damshtrakaralani bhayanakani
kechid vilagnā dasanantareshu
samdrisyante churnitair uttamangaih

All these sons of Dhritarashtra, with hosts of rulers, Bhīshma, Drona, and that son of a charioteer (Karna), with our warrior chiefs

are rushing into Your fearful mouths terrible with teeth, some are found sticking in the gaps between the teeth with their heads crushed to powder

The reference here is to the context of warfare War may be compared to a landslide in human affairs When it is let loose there is a general re-shuffling, fusing or melting of values, and a new order of things, social, economical, not to mention political, emerges It is not merely enemies that are involved, as each one of the contending parties might mechanically think Kings are involved in it as much as the adopted son of a charioteer All belong equally to a single situation

Hence the reference to *Sutaputra* (*i e*, Karna) adopted son of a charioteer He was a hero and a nobleman on his own, but *only indirectly connected with* the Kauravas and even the Pāndavas The reason why warriors and heroes are all put together for destruction must be because they constitute dynamic social elements Bhishma and Drona more particularly represent types of spirituality in their own persons, even outside the concept of heroism

The reference to heads being crushed to powder is particularly ghastly, as in keeping *with the warfare which is* both actual and terrible at once The gaps between the teeth in which *some of these* warriors are caught must refer to those like Arjuna himself who, though hesitating to fight, have no option They are hemmed in by two aspects of necessity and

obliged to be pressed onwards, caught in a surging queue as it were That everybody is equally involved including Arjuna, is again stated in its converse form by Krishna in verse 32

An item such as warfare ought to be thought of in the process of becoming as one among many such in the cosmic process as a whole Hence it is that mouths are plural here rather than singular The plural employed in reference to the interstices between the teeth need not therefore apply to one and the same mouth only Thus the meaning we have given above is further justified

[28] *yatha nadinam bahava mbuvegah*
samudram eva bhimukha dravanti
tatha tava mi naralokavira
visanti vaktrany abhivijvalanti

As many rushing torrents of rivers race towards the ocean so do these heroes in the world of men enter Your flaming mouths

The figure of speech is here modified from the picture of a cosmic man devouring all, to one of a cosmic principle *above* which absorbs into itself all the varied items of becoming found in the existing cosmos These varied processes are compared to rivers that enter the mouths which lead presumably into an ocean The urge of necessity seems reversed in the present verse Instead of devouring the rivers by themselves, by the force of their currents push into the mouths of the sea. The plurality of mouths employed here becomes a negligible factor, and when we read also that the mouths are flaming, the realism becomes completely violated in the mixed metaphor There is a strange mixture of realism and symbolism here This verse only prepares the way for the picture presented in verse 31 where realistic imagery is abandoned in favour of a numinous presence representing the Unknown attaining the point of being merely a tremendous mystery

[29] *yatha pradiptam jvalanam patanga*
visanti nasaya samriddhavegah
tathai va nasaya visanti lokas
tava pi aktram samriddhavegah

As moths speed into a blazing fire to be destroyed
just so do these worlds also speed into Your mouths
unto their destruction

Heliotropism is a phenomenon familiar in natural science Life turns towards the sun The bright fire of the cosmic principle which has been compared to a vast sea with bright mouths is treated here as a light into which everything is re absorbed in the great cosmic process of becoming Just as knowledge is attractive or interesting to man so a brilliant light fills the whole of the interest of an insect and blinded as it were by the interest it seeks to merge itself in the supreme light In the world of human values all unitary items strive to reach the unitive Absolute The individuality of each unit thus becomes extinguished in the boundlessness of the Absolute Such are some of the philosophical implications of the vision represented here

The reference to *lokah* (worlds) refers to value systems which may be said to merge in the supreme value of the Absolute

[30] *lelihyase grasamanah samantal*
lokan samagran vadanair jvaladbhih
tejobhir apurya jagat samagram
bhasas tavo grah pratapanti vishno

You lick up devouring all worlds on every side
with Your flaming mouths filling the whole world
with glory Your fierce rays are blazing forth O
All pervading One

The image presented here is not unlike the one in the *Mundaka Upanishad* (I, ii 4) where reference is made to the seven tongues of fire the most important one of which is called *visvaruchi* (the universe-taster) The universe may be said to leap into visible form by the principle of light while colours shapes and forms may be said to be gradations in light. This principle may be said to contain all varieties

If we extend the figure of speech further backwards and think of light as representing wisdom all kinds of values in this world are implied in the supreme value of the Absolute It is in this sense that the glory of the Absolute is said to fill the very worlds that have entered into Its mouths

The all-pervading Vishnu conforms to a supreme Sun rather than a cosmic man as hitherto pictured. Ontological imagery has given place to one teleologically conceived. The reference to filling the whole world with glory cannot be understood if a cosmic man devoured all the worlds. It is rather the supreme Sun which illumines the worlds, bathing them all in his own glory. The subtle reversal of the imagery in the very same vision thus becomes evident.

[31] *akhyāhi me ko bhavān ugrarupo*
namo 'stu te devavara prasida
vijnatum ichchhami bhavantam ādyam
na hi prajanāmi tava pravrittim

Tell me who You are, so fierce in form, I bow to You, O superior God, Be gracious! I want to understand You, O Prime One, nor do I know Your (positive) continued becoming.

The limit of the vision is reached in this verse in which it is only a mark of interrogation and exclamation that remains for Arjuna. The Absolute is still to be known. The vision only covers aspects of the Absolute, beginning from the ontological and leading up through the teleological to a notion that culminates in a tremendous mystery beyond which it is evidently impossible to reach through visions and descriptions. Arjuna is left in bewilderment even at the end of the most direct of visions that could possibly be described.

Sribhagavan uvācha

[32] *kālo 'smi lokakshayakrit pravriddho*
lokan samahartum iha pravrittah
rite 'pi tvam na bhavishyanti sarve
ye 'vasthitah pratyanikeshu yodhah

[33] *tasmāt tvam uttishtha yaso labhasva*
jitvā satrun bhunkshva rajyam samriddham
mayai 'vai 'te nihatāh purvam eva
nimittamātram bhava savyasāchin

[34] *dronam cha bhishmam cha jayadratham cha*
karnam tatha 'nyan api yodhavīran

maya hatams tvam jahi ma vyathishtha
yudhyasva jetasi rane sapatnan

Krishna said
I am world destroying Time grown into hardened maturity operating here continuously, desolating the worlds Even without you none of the warriors standing in the opposing armies shall continue to exist

Therefore do you arise and gain fame Conquering your foes enjoy the realm of abundance By Me even they have been already slain Be you the incidental cause only O Left handed One (*savyasachin*—Arjuna)

Drona and Bhishma Jayadratha Karna and other great battle heroes these are all slain by Me Do not be distressed Fight on you shall conquer in battle your rival (co warriors)

These three verses coming from Krishna form a section of their own and offer certain problems connected with the teaching of the Gita

There is apparently a definite incitement to war and encouragement on the part of Krishna here Many scholars especially those who have no religious affiliations to India have very pertinently put their finger on this most important problem It could be stated thus How could Krishna who represents the Absolute or God and thus goodness and the highest of spiritual and ethical values encourage warfare in which the killing of fellow men is involved?

Various answers have been put forward by people ranging from mere religious apologists to philosophers but the vagueness that has surrounded this problem remains to this day We shall therefore scrutinize these verses very closely for an answer consistent with the teaching of the Gita as a whole The following considerations could be stated

(1) Throughout the Gita which is part of an epic poem there is a general background of warfare which comes into evidence in such expressions describing Arjuna as *paramtapa* (O Burner of Foes) and *purusharshabha* (O Bull among Men) We might say therefore that the epic setting is the canvas

and that the Gita teaching itself is the painting which should not be mixed up with the canvas The incitement to war therefore forms part of the natural or inevitable background of the Gita which Vyasa could not completely efface without lifting the painting from its natural canvas

(2) Arjuna himself is but one of the ordinary human characters of the epic narrative He has his own status outside the wisdom context as one of the Pandavas with his own interests to safeguard However much a man might be a philosopher, there are human limitations to the reaction that a given actual situation might have on an individual Taking Arjuna as a simple man among men, it is but natural that his brother-in law whom he loves and confides in intimately, should advise him not to be a backslider when caught in the imperative necessity of a war situation As Narayana Guru once put it briefly, Arjuna would have repented for not fighting if he had retired from the battlefield in a moment of philosophical confusion

(3) We have noticed throughout that each Chapter of the Gita formed a close system of its own or *darsana* (special vision of reality) and the consistency of statements in each Chapter had to be referred to its own proper frame of reference and not crossways between two different visions of reality

We noticed further that in the earlier Chapters which make the anterior half of the book, the problem is approached in a realistic spirit For example, there was reference in ii, 36 to the extreme distress that ill repute would bring to Arjuna if he should run away from the battlefield There are situations in the necessary context of life in which it is no more possible to make any choice between alternatives The vulgar name for such a force may be destiny or fate More respectable names for it would be providence or chance

There is an element of determinism running side by side with indeterminism in the nature of the physical world, as scientists recognize Newton s laws hold good side by side with Einstein s theories The man who is caught in a surging queue can hardly decide which way to move A woman advanced in pregnancy has hardly any choice whether to give birth to a child or not The imperative urge of becoming has a force that has to be reckoned with especially when circumstances have become hardened around it

A war situation represents exactly this kind of hardening This is what has been referred to in verse 32 as *pravriddhah*

(grown into hard maturity) A benignant god is not implied in this Chapter *On the contrary Krishna says definitely that* he has come to destroy We remember that Krishna in IX, 29, represented a neutral if not a benign personality In V, 25, he pronounces himself as the friend of all beings

The structure of the Gita is conceived in such a way that if the earliest Chapters are like the stones on one side of an arch, tending to support it from the ground, the later Chapters have to perform the same function starting in another direction The role of the keystone is fulfilled by the two central Chapters The present Chapter comes after the symmetrical centre of the arch has been passed, and in keeping with the general scheme we can expect the treatment here to be different from the central and earlier Chapters The discussion in the earlier Chapters centred round a doubting Arjuna *Here in the later Chapters the centre of interest is shifting* degree by degree to Krishna himself as an actively positive and determining Godhead or Providence In fact such a tendency reaches its culmination in XVI, 19 where he becomes an angry or chastising deity

The Absolute is not to be looked upon as an impotent or spent force It is a virile and radical principle sometimes evident with a touch of tragic heroism Creation is both comic and tragic, benign and terrible, when viewed from its own negative or positive side The necessary and the contingent aspects exchange positions yielding primacy to one or the other, depending on the angle from which reality is viewed

When all the different possible views about the Absolute are put into one living whole as finally given to the intuition of a wise man that should represent reality, and this is what the Gita attempts to accomplish It is usual even on the part of scholars to say that the Gita contradicts itself in numerous places In the light of the suggestion we have made here that each Chapter is a distinct *darsana* (vision of reality), and that each has a *general innate* structure of its own with its own frame of reference and that statements can tally strictly only within the four walls of each Chapter the charge of contradic*tion in the Gita would fall to the ground*

Further the oft repeated saying that the Gita gives an answer to any question of any man at any stage of life, which cannot be a *compliment* to the definiteness of the Gita s teaching, becomes understandable in a new light by which

the different statements fall into a certain organic and symmetrical order which the author has in mind

(4) Coming to the philosophical content of these verses we have the key-word indicated by Krishna that he represents *kala* (time) In earlier Chapters and even in the present Chapter in Arjuna's words, the Absolute was represented as being without beginning, middle or end This is not the same as pure duration It is conceived in terms of events belonging to the outer world, even when understood as the ticking of a clock

Krishna therefore refers to himself here as an irreversible inexorable factor of necessity in terms of the flow of outward physical events We see people dying as time, like the great car of Jagganath, passes on The imperative tragic march of time is known to literature, especially to great writers such as Shakespeare who speaks of a providence that shapes our ends, or of a tide in the affairs of man The choice is " to be or not to be " and " to be " has necessarily to be voted for Such is the imperative nature of necessity in which warlike or tragic heroes get caught The jaws of time hold them between its teeth as pictured earlier, with no choice whatever between " to be " or " not to be " Such a crude and harsh picture of war actualities subjected to a contemplative vision of the first degree extends from verse 9 to verse 35 inclusive These are brackets enclosing crude actualities of the order of the first degree device of Samjaya

(5) This stress on the necessary aspect of the Absolute though stated so unmistakably in this Chapter, and carefully enclosed within the brackets of the first degree Samjaya device, does not, however, compromise the philosophical nature of the Gita as a whole There are categoric statements inserted throughout the Chapters which retrieve it from such a disastrous one sided and fatalistic teaching We shall refer to them as we pass on The *purushottama* (supreme spirit) of Chapter xv, 18 and 19, is above both necessity and contingency as we shall see. Even when speaking of the *gunatraya* (three specific natural factors) in xiv, 23, it is the man who takes a neutral position above necessity who is held up as an example, and not one who merely succumbs to necessity, however strong that necessity might be The overall philosophical nature of the Gita is finally confirmed by the well known verse in xviii, 66 It is true that the primacy given to necessity continues unabated till verse 35 of the present Chapter and continues in a more toned down form even up to xviii, 62, but finally we notice

that the tone again changes where it catches up with the general spirit in which the Gita has been conceived by its author as a whole Finally it is only the neutral Absolute, and the establishing of a bipolar relation with it that matters

In answer then, to the major problem stated earlier, the position reduces itself to this besides the requirements of an epic and consideration for the sentiments of a human Arjuna, there is a simple recognition here of the need for Arjuna to understand the imperative force of necessity in which he happens to be caught without any choice The Absolute cannot *reverse its own necessary laws, and one is obliged " to be "* part of it

Freedom, however, remains in its own domain, unaffected by any limitations of necessity Krishna's role is not that of a war-monger in the ordinary sense, but that of a wise friend who is capable of appraising the situation in both philosophical and actual terms He is speaking here merely as a representa *tive of both the field and the knower of the field as explained* in Chapter XIII, but this in no way affects his own status as *purushottama* (the supreme spirit), that is, as one who transcends this duality

Verse 34 makes it clear that it is the possible regret of Arjuna with which he is concerned When the inevitable is anyhow to win the battle for Arjuna, Arjuna is merely as it were, one swallow in relation to a summer, as pointed out in verse 32 Even his fighting does not count because it is only to be *looked* upon as *incidental to the larger situation, as stated* in verse 33

To sum up, if one should ask for a pointed and simple answer to the problem raised above, we could state that Krishna found that Arjuna would lapse into regret later if he did not give him the encouragement to play his natural role The negation of trying to live in a vacuum was the danger that Krishna helped his friend successfully to avoid under very special circumstances

In verse 32 the word *kala* (time) *should not be understood* in pure terms, because of the reference to its active agency in destroying the world Arjuna wanted to know what the active agency of the Absolute could be (at the end of verse 31) The expression *pravrittah* (positive continued becoming) must therefore refer to the same action implied in the question *But pravriddhah* (grown into hardened maturity) implies that even

activity can have a more hardened manifestation in which any flexibility, choice or adaptability to circumstances becomes out of the question Necessity clinches all arguments

The reference to the opposing armies in verse 32 is different from what is treated more dualistically in verse 34 as *sapatnan* (rival co-warriors) In verse 32 the two parties are referred to without distinction The absence of Arjuna would not make any appreciable difference to the situation taken as a whole Moreover the warriors are not referred to in verse 32 as dying, but rather as *na bhavishyanti* (shall not be) or as ceasing to exist

The process of becoming should be visualized with both of its aspects together Life or food is referred to as living upon life or food itself in the *Taittiriya Upanishad* (*valli*, iii). Something like a Zeno paradox is presented here Time visualized even objectively as here is a process of ruthless becoming, constituting the tragic problem of evil that has never been explained away by any philosophy however idealistic

In verse 33 Arjuna is personally addressed in his own individual interest Philosophy is not allowed to cloud or vitiate the commonsense issue involved The necessary side of life in its most pressing aspects is not to be and cannot be brushed aside Wisdom is not meant to cloud commonsense, as in so many forms of vague opinion or religious piety Both wisdom and commonsense are complementary, and have their proper places, as developed and conclusively stated in xiii, 23 and 34

The neutral attitude of the wise man results from the cancelling out of the necessary against the contingent and not by giving undue prominence to one or the other Yoga theoretically amounts to this

The reference in verse 33 to anticipatory killing could be looked upon in two ways, firstly that all objective existence being subject to change, it has no intrinsic existence in the light of the eternal, and secondly that evil, being based on something false and non existent, has no proper being as such A bad man is already dead Good men approximate to values that are eternal and bad men to the extent that they are bad may in principle be said to have already perished

The *yasha* (fame) must be construed here to mean fame based on something real or good, and likewise *rajyam samriddham* (realm of abundance of goods) need not necessarily refer to that particular kingdom that Arjuna can legalistically claim It might refer more generally to the way that leads to a more abundant life

Nimittamatram (incidental cause only) should also be understood with its logical implications Taking the familiar example of a potter at his wheel, the clay he uses is the material cause which is of a fundamental nature The potter and the wheel could vary according to circumstances The particular potter does not count, nor the particular pattern of the wheel These are often distinguished in India as *upadana* (the material cause) and *nimitta* (the efficient cause) respectively The potter and wheel are merely instrumental or of incidental importance only, varying according to circumstances Arjuna here as a person is therefore just an incidental factor in a larger situation that is given He is only being reminded of this verity

Whether the reference in verse 33 to *savyasachin* (left handed one) is intended to reflect discredit on Arjuna is not quite clear, but according to Sankara the word can be interpreted as referring to the ambidextrous skill of Arjuna rather than his being merely left handed

In verse 34 specific names are mentioned Although all of them are to be feared, they are by no means the worst examples of bad men ranged against Arjuna s side Why therefore specific reference should be made to such good teachers and warriors of worth is a relevant question They represent superior values in themselves even outside the mere context of warfare, as we have already pointed out early in this work The spirituality imparted to Arjuna now, being thoroughly absolutist in its character, supersedes every other value however esteemed it might have been till now in the anterior context of the *Mahabharata* war Therefore the specific mention of these names must be intended to point out the superiority of the revalued spirituality of Krishna which is now Arjuna's also Karna and Jayadratha are warriors who hold secret weapons or boons of a divine nature Drona represents values implicit in Vedic ritualism and Bhishma is a patriarch and model of a man of abnegation and chastity

The expression *ma vyathishtha* (be not distressed) refers to any possible hesitation remaining in the attitude of Arjuna even after the explanation given, more particularly in regard to the *Gurus* (teachers) such as Drona and Bhishma It does not recommend ruthless or pitiless killing as some loose translators would seem to imply

In the last line Krishna is not deteriorating into a fortune-teller In keeping with the Upanishadic dictum that truth alone prevails the meaning is to be construed in comprehensive

terms, rather than as referring to the incidental personalities involved An absolutist victor, as Arjuna is recommended here to be, need not even know the names of his individual rivals He is not to think of them relativistically as acquaintances belonging to narrow or limited contexts

The expression *sapatnan* (rivals) so reminiscent of *sapatni* (co wife of a common husband), would seem to suggest that there is at least one interest common between them and Arjuna, while in certain other matters the interests clash It is the final truth that should prevail as against any parties dualistically understood, whatever their status

Samjaya uvacha

[35] *etach chhrutva vachanam kesavasya*
kritanjalir vepamanah kriti
namaskritva bhuya eva 'ha krishnam
sagadgadam bhitabhitah pranamya

Samjaya said
Having heard that speech of Kesava (Krishna) the Diademed One (Arjuna) with worshipfully joined palms, trembling, inclining himself again before Krishna, with emotional stuttering, in sustained fear, bowing down, spoke

The intervention of Samjaya here is perhaps intended to punctuate the climax of the vision that has been reached as Krishna describes his own form The vision itself was lifted somewhat out of the human context and having fulfilled its purpose had to be discarded for the continuation of the theme of the Gita again from a more human standpoint Samjaya therefore brings in his religious note wherein there is Arjuna in a crisis of emotion unable to pronounce his words with clarity, *sagadgadam* (with emotional stuttering) He is even said to be prostrating completely, cowed down with an abject form of fear, *bhitabhitah* (in sustained fear) This is not at all in keeping with the self respect of a warrior The conventional picture of a supplicating worshipper here might be in place in a *Puranic* (legendary) religious setting, or perhaps when a seeker of wisdom finds the *Guru s* teaching too much for him Whatever may be the consideration here, Samjaya's words are meant to punctuate the climax of the vision

Arjuna uvacha

[36] *sthane hrishikesa tava prakirtya*
jagat prahrishyaty anurajyate cha
rakshamsi bhitani diso dravanti
sarve namasyanti cha siddhasamghah

Arjuna said
O Hrishikesa (Krishna), it is but right that the world is delighted in praising You, that demons fly in fear to every quarter, and (that) all hosts of perfected ones bow in adoration to You

Verses 36 to 43 contain Arjuna's words in the form of a panegyric of exalted devotion The awe inspiring picture is abandoned in favour of a state of world rejoicing as indicated by *jagat prahrishyate* (the world rejoices) Only the *rakshasas* (demons) are terrified The *siddhas* (beings perfected through psychic discipline) take a worshipful attitude There is a return to conventional scales of values and devotion in the sense of ordinary *bhakti* (adoration) We thus approach the vision once again from the more human standpoint We notice here also that Arjuna speaks with a certain authority of his own, even as a philosopher, in the next verse

[37] *kasmach cha te na nameran mahatman*
gariyase brahmano py adikartre
ananta devesa jagannivasa
tvam aksharam sad asat tatparam yat

And why should they not bow to You O Great Self more venerable even than Brahma the first maker O Endless God of gods Basis of the Universe ! You are the Imperishable One Existence and Non Existence, and What is beyond (even) that

Although starting conventionally Arjuna here transcends conventional limits altogether and by using *sad asat* (existence and non existence) together again reaches the highest point in Vedantic philosophical speculation The reference to the Absolute as being greater than Brahma himself who is the first creator lifts the vision above the level of theology The reference to the Absolute as the basis of the whole universe and

as *tatparam yat* (that which is beyond) brings together two extreme aspects of the vision that we have noticed in verse 28.

[38] *tvam ādidevah purushah purānas*
tvam asya visvasya param nidhānam
vettā 'si vedyam cha param cha dhāma
tvayā tatam visvam anantarūpa

You are the first of the gods and the Ancient Spirit; You are the Supreme Basis of the Universe; You are both the Knower and the Knowable; You are the (transcendent) Beyond and the (immanent) Receptacle (here); the universe is pervaded by You, O One (capable) of Limitless Form!

The same mixed imagery in which ontological factors alternate with the hypothetical, continues. The references to *vettā 'si vedyam cha* (the knower and the knowable) and also to *param* (the transcendent beyond), *i.e.*, the hypothetical, and to *dhāma* (basis) here and now, *i.e.*, ontological, in pairs together, mark the synthetic style adopted.

[39] *vāyur yamo 'gnir varunah sasānkah*
prajāpatis tvam prapitāmahas cha
namo namas te 'stu sahasrakritvah
punas cha bhūyo 'pi namo namas te

You are Vāyu (wind deity), Yama (death deity), Agni (fire deity), Varuna (sea deity), Sasānka (lunar deity), Prajāpati (first of progenitors) and the Great-grandsire; Hail! Hail to You! A thousand times and again, Hail! Hail to You!

The juxtaposition here of the idea of *Prajāpati* (first of progenitors) and *prapitāmaha* (great-grandsire) is unusual. Any one of them would have sufficed normally, but the two epithets are intended to fuse the Vedic cosmology with the tradition of ancestor-worship.

[40] *namah purastād atha prishthatas te*
namo 'stu te sarvata eva sarva
ananta vīryāmita vikramas tvam
sarvam samāpnoshi tato 'si sarvah

> Prostrations to You before and after, prostrations to You on every side, O All, of endless potency and immeasurable strength, You terminate all, then You become all!

The prostrations in the first line, before and after, may refer to the time dimensional aspect of the Absolute, and the prostrations in the second line to points in space

The reference to *virya* (potent power) has to be distinguished from *vikrama* (overt strength) Potency is what comes into effect through duration while overt strength expresses itself at a given moment in all directions like a bomb that bursts Or the difference can be said to be something like that between a snake and a tiger

The two expressions *samapnoshi* (you bring to conclusion) and *tato 'si sarvah* (so you are all) must also be understood as implying the same contrast between time and space There is a subtle inter relation between time and space implied here

[41] *sakhe 'ti matva prasabham yad uktam*
he krishna he yadava he sakhe 'ti
ajanata mahimanam tave 'dam
maya pramadat pranayena va 'pi

[42] *yach cha 'vahasartham asatkrito 'si*
vihara sayyasana bhojaneshu
eko 'thava py achyuta tatsamaksham
tat kshamaye tvam aham aprameyam

> Whatever I have said rashly from carelessness or fondness, addressing You as 'O Krishna, O Yādava, O Comrade, thinking of You as an intimate and ignorant of this Your greatness,

> and for whatever jesting irreverence I may have shown You, whether at play reposing, or seated or at meals, either when remaining by myself or when You were present, that I ask O Achyuta (Krishna), to forgive O Unpredicable One!

The section covering verses 41 to 46 alludes to various forms of devotional or *bhakti* (adoration) relationship extant or possible This is to be dealt with on its own in the next Chapter.

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The section covering verses 41 to 46 alludes to various forms of devotional or *bhakti* (adoration) relationship extant or possible This is to be dealt with on its own in the next Chapter

The review of the different varieties in this section must be by way of preparation and to contrast them with that single type of devotion recommended in the last verse of this Chapter, and throughout the Gita generally

The method of the Gita is never to condemn a lower form of ritual worship or devotion in opposition to the highest form recommended, but always to treat them hand in hand. Various forms of sacrifice and yoga have been similarly covered in the earlier Chapters, without decreasing the stress of the best form recommended at the end of each discussion (see IV 23-32 and also Chapter VI).

The *Purānic* (religious, legendary) type of devotion was reflected in Samjaya's speech in verse 35. Arjuna's own pattern of worship conforms to what may be described as that of an *upāsana murti* (worship of a fixed form for purposes of ritual offering) of the four-armed Vishnu This predilection is sufficiently evident from verse 17 of this Chapter, again repeated in verse 46 But within the limitations of such a conventional worship, Arjuna is capable of thinking of different varieties of affiliation to the Absolute which are correct even in the light of the canonical text-books likely to have been known to him But the Gita as a *sastra* (canonical text-book) sets its own standard of devotion which is higher than the conventional

In verses 41 and 42 wrong or accidental relationships possible outside the context of contemplation are all referred to, with a view to their elimination in establishing the proper relationship to be described later

The reference to Yadava is one based on Arjuna's marital relationship with the clan to which Krishna belonged This is but one example of the miscellaneous nature of Arjuna's relations implied in these epithets

The phrase *tatsamaksham* (when you were present) often translated " in the presence of others " has been so translated because the relation between Krishna and Arjuna is the chief subject matter throughout

The detailed references to play, repose, seated at meals, are to show that there are various moments in our everyday life which are casual and incidental in which one might not be properly related to the Absolute as recommended in v, 9 and 10 The pardon here prayed for by Arjuna is really for his acts of omission in conforming to the pattern of life of a true contemplative in his odd moments

[43] *pita 'si lokasya characharasya*
tvam asya pujyas cha gurur gariyan
na tvatsamo sty abhyadhikah kuto nyo
lokatraye py apratimaprabhava

You are the Father of the world, of the moving and unmoving, You are to be reverenced by this (world) and (are) the supreme Guru, none is Your equal, how then could there be one greater than You, even in the three worlds, O One of incomparable greatness!

The father son and the *guru sishya* (teacher disciple) relationships are mentioned here Krishna is referred to as the one who has no equal and as the highest to be reverenced The attitude is therefore one of intense unitive affiliation to the Absolute as far as Arjuna is able to understand

[44] *tasmat pranamya pranidhaya kayam*
prasadaye tvam aham isam idyam
pite va putrasya sakhe va sakhyuh
priyah priyaya rhasi deva sodhum

Therefore bowing down and prostrating my body, I seek Your grace O adorable Lord, (it is but proper that) You, O God should bear with me, as father to son as friend to friend as lover to beloved

Bhakti (devotion) in such writings as the *Narada Bhakti Sutras* (Verses on Devotion by the Sage Narada) is said to have different modes There are for instance the *dasya bhava* (servant attitude), the *asrita bhava* (refugee attitude) and the *suhrid bhava* (friendly attitude) Coupling worshipper and worshipped into one situation conforms to a correct contemplative approach to devotion which cannot be understood unilaterally Hence the references here to father son etc, are very apt, though coming from Arjuna only

[45] *adrishtapurvam hrishito smi drishtva*
bhayena cha pravyathitam mano me
tad eva me darsaya deva rupam
prasida devesa jagannivasa

[46] *kiritinam gadinam chakrahastam*
ichchhāmi tvām drashtum aham tathai 'va
tenai 'va rūpena chaturbhujena
sahasrabāho bhava visvamūrte

I am glad having seen what has never been seen by anyone before, and my mind is troubled with fear; show me that very form, O God; be pleased, O God of gods, O Abode of the Universe;

I want to see You even so, diademed, with mace and discus in Your hand; assume that very form with four Arms, O Thousand-armed, O One of Universal Form!

Arjuna here speaks of both fear and gladness at the same time. Every devotee in his position has to draw the line between the picture of the Absolute that he can bear and what is natural to his own previous conditioning. A more philosophic temperament would perhaps be able to approximate nearer to an abstract or unconditioned idea of the Absolute. This largely depends upon temperament and conditionings depending on each individual.

In keeping with Arjuna's own conditioning, he asks for the more comforting form of the four-armed Vishnu. He plainly confesses that the multiplicity of arms and the protean character of the possible shapes that Krishna is capable of assuming is too much for him. Arjuna's devotion thus gains here stable ground again.

Sribhagavān uvācha

[47] *mayā prasannena tavā 'rjune 'dam*
rūpam param darsitam ātmayogāt
tejomayam visvam anantam ādyam
yan me tvadanyena na drishtapūrvam

Krishna said:
By My favour, O Arjuna, this supreme form has been shown, by the yoga pertaining to the Self, made up of light, universal, endless, primal, never before seen by any other than yourself.

In this section of three verses (47 to 49) Krishna examines the nature of the vision in his own words from his own standpoint

and says, as he has said already and will repeat again, that the vision is far superior to what is possible through the Vedas, sacrifices, studies, gifts, rituals and austerity It is a culminating vision of the Absolute as revalued and restated for the first time by Krishna himself He stresses the supreme value of such a vision and resumes his normal form as a human being

The term *atmayogat* (through the yoga pertaining to the Self) in this verse, refers to the distinguishing feature of the vision according to Krishna, which should be understood side by side with the epithets *mahatman* (great Self) and *yogesvara* (master yogi) which occur in this Chapter and elsewhere The Absolute is appraised most directly in terms of the Self, and this truth has already been mentioned in x, 15

The favour conferred on Arjuna consists of allowing him to place himself as Krishna s own Self, and thus help him in having a vision that is superior to all other approaches *Ātmayogat* (through the yoga pertaining to the Self) is a new approach different from other theological or cosmological approaches known generally

[48] *na vedayajnadhyayanair na danair*
na cha kriyabhir na tapobhir ugraih
evamrupah sakya aham nriloke
drashtum tvadanyena kurupravīra

Neither by the Vedas, sacrifices, nor by study, nor by gifts, nor by ritual, nor by severe austerities, can I possibly be seen in such a form in the human world, by anyone other than you, *O Hero of the Kurus* (Arjuna)

The reference here to *nriloka* (the human world) admits that the vision hitherto described is not normally given to men Arjuna alone has this unique favour through Krishna This brings out the verity so well known in Indian spirituality that no knowledge is valid without a *guru*

True vision of the Absolute comes only by the cancelling out of two counterparts, one represented by the disciple and the other by the teacher Being essentially dialectical, absolutist wisdom cannot be reached by any one-legged argument, by ratiocination or eristic forms of reasoning or any such one-sided methods, all of which fall short of the mark as far as the truth of contemplative wisdom is concerned

As the Gita is never tired of repeating, this underlines further, as seen in verse 53 later, that the hitherto usually recognized approaches to wisdom do not reach that culminating point implied in the finalized doctrine of the Gita

[49] *ma te vyatha ma cha vimudhabhavo*
drishtva rupam ghoram idrin mame 'dam
vyapetabhih pritamanah punas tvam
tad eva me rupam idam prapasya

Be not distressed do not be confused, having seen such a terrible form of Mine, free from fear, mentally comforted, again behold that very form of Mine (presently) here

This verse consoles Arjuna but definitely admits that the terrible form did not fit in with the normal human context. There was a harsh and specialized quality which belonged perhaps, according to Krishna, to the context of war in which Arjuna was involved Krishna would perhaps have avoided showing this terrible aspect if it had not been for the hard actualities of warfare which made such a vision though somewhat abnormal, necessary all the same It is further suggested indirectly that visions and ecstatic states properly belong to the field of abnormal psychology The reference to the human world in the previous verse would support such a view

Tad eva me rupam (even that form of Mine) is construed by Sankara as meaning the four armed Vishnu Sankara s introduction to the Gita itself refers to Vishnu as being born as the son of Vasudeva to preserve order and protect brahmanical values. For our part we do not see why here, in the absence of any reference to a return to a non human four armed form, such a construction should be given We see that Arjuna in verse 51 refers to *manusham rupam* (the human form) which normally should be the antecedent of the present reference

Sankara s *Puranic* (religious legendary) predilections must be responsible for dragging in the four armed Vishnu form into a context where it is absent and unnecessary This attitude of Sankara goes well with his condoning of and conniving at the injustices involved in caste which we had occasion to point out already

The reference to Vāsudeva as a historical person and Krishna being born as an *avatār* (incarnation from on high) of Vishnu, even if they should have any validity, hold no direct interest to the modern man who wants to get at the root of the Gita teaching as a universal textbook. That the Bhāgavata doctrine of *vyūha* and the *Purānic* idea of the ten *avatārs* are both foreign to the Gita has already been pointed out under verse 17 earlier.

Samjaya uvācha

[50] *ity arjunam vāsudevas tatho 'ktva*
svakam rupam darsayam āsa bhuyah
āsvāsayam asa cha bhitam enam
bhutvā punah saumyavapur mahatmā

Samjaya said
Having thus spoken to Arjuna, Vāsudeva (Krishna) again showed his own form and the Great Self, becoming mild in form, consoled him who was terrified

Samjaya's words are meant to close the brackets, as it were, around the parenthesis of the terrible vision which was introduced into the Gita to meet the gross requirements of a war situation Samjaya makes his appearance again only at the end of the book

Arjuna uvācha

[51] *drishtve 'dam mānusham rupam*
tava saumyam janārdana
idānīm asmi samvrittah
sachetah prakritim gatah

Arjuna said
Beholding again this Your mild human form, O Janārdana (Krishna), I am now calm, with the living mind restored to its natural state

Beginning from this verse to the end of the Chapter there is an absence of the exaltation produced by the vision, and Krishna and Arjuna continue the dialogue, standing, as it were, off-stage

The expression *sachetāh* (with the living mind regained) suggests that Arjuna has recovered from the exaggerated after-effects of the vision that was too much for him. He is conscious of his own personality and normal relationships as an intelligent and responsible living man.

Sribhagavān uvācha

[52] *sudurdarsam idam rūpam*
drishtavān asi yan mama
devā apy asya rūpasya
nityam darsanakānkshinah

Krishna said:
This form of Mine which you have seen is very hard to see indeed; even the gods ever aspire to behold this form.

By saying that even the gods are aspiring for the vision that Arjuna as a mere human being has had the privilege of seeing, the status of the Absolute as representing the vision is raised far above the scope and context of religion altogether. It must be thought of as being of a highly mystical or contemplative order.

The expression *nityam* (ever, always) implies that the gods can never attain to such a high vision, even if they should wait for all time. The vision is therefore completely outside the scope of the theological context to which the gods belong.

[53] *nā 'ham vedair na tapasā*
na dānena na che 'jyayā
sakya evamvidho drashtum
drishtavān asi mām yathā

Not by Vedas, nor by austerity, nor by gifts, nor by sacrifice, can I be seen in this form as you have seen Me.

This is a repetition of verse 48 and rejects categorically all approaches to the vision of the Absolute by religious methods such as here enumerated.

[54] *bhaktyā tv ananyayā sakya*
aham evamvidho 'rjuna

jnatum drashtum cha tattvena
praveshtum cha paramtapa

But by devotion that excludes all else, O Arjuna, I can be known, seen, and in principle entered into, Paramtapa (Arjuna)

The way that will surely succeed, not only in producing the full effect but also in comprehending the full import of the vision is stated here without ambiguity This touches the central doctrine of the Gita expressed in various ways throughout the work, in the familiar form of "you shall even attain to Me"

The attaining here referred to has implications of an absolutist nature which it would be wrong to overlook. There is always implied in such instances an identity or unity of a very thorough character as between the seeker and the wisdom of the Absolute Such references by no means suggest the weak variety of *bhakti* (devotion) which mostly consists of clashing cymbals, bell ringings and parrot like muttering of *mantrams* (sacred syllables) But of course such practices have their justification, in so far as they displace worse practices!

The expression *ananyaya* (to the exclusion of all else) referred to in VIII, 22 and IX, 22, is to secure for the superior type of devotion meant here, that necessary bipolar condition

The reference to *tattvena* (according to principle) also touches another prerequisite of a proper affiliation to the Absolute, also insisted upon in IV, 9, VII, 3, X, 7 and XVIII, 55, and to be considered as part of the finalized doctrine of the Gita

The idea of entering into the Absolute indicated by the word *praveshtum* (to enter) is also a favourite form of expression in the Gita Attaining, reaching or entering into the Absolute, can only suggest a form of unification between the subject and the object, the worshipper and the worshipped When Krishna says that such and such a devotee is dear and would reach him surely, it is this same kind of union which is implied

Thus something more than a mere vision is promised here by Krishna if Arjuna could establish that particular kind of *bipolar affiliation which forms* as we have said, part of the finalized doctrine of the Gita

[55] *matkarmakrin matparamo*
madbhaktah sangavarjitah
nirvairah sarvabhūteshu
yah sa mām eti pāndava

He who does actions that are Mine, whose Supreme is Myself, whose devotion is to Me, devoid of attachment, free from enmity to all beings, he reaches Me, O Pāndava (Arjuna).

By way of conclusion there is a summing up of approaches to the Absolute which refer backwards to subjects such as *karma* (action) already covered in earlier Chapters. The reference to *bhakti* (devotion) brings the subject up to the present, leading up to the next Chapter.

The expression *matparamah* (having Me as the supreme) is peculiar to the style of the Gita, in the same way as *machchittah* (with their relational mind in Me) in VI, 14, X, 9, and XVIII, 57 and 58. Other expressions like *madgataprāna* (their life-tendencies penetrating into Me) of X, 9, express clearly what is in the mind of the author, when such seemingly strained expressions have to be resorted to by him. Intimate bipolar relationship between the factors involved in each case should be clearly understood if the Gita doctrine is to be grasped in the form intended by the author.

The reference to *nirvairah* (without enmity) seems an anti-climax to the Chapter as a whole which has been geared to war-mindedness and even to the recommendation of slaying of foes. But when we consider the parenthetical character of the vision, as we have explained, and remember that the Gita intends hereafter to proceed more normally, the reference to lack of enmity becomes understandable. Read together with the other expression *sangavarjitah* (devoid of attachment) the treatment attains the usual contemplative level.

These two references compensate for any over-emphasis on the harsh or necessary aspects of the Absolute that may still linger in the mind of Arjuna or of any student of the Gita. Hard necessity was recognized and given due place in the highly realistic vision which could not omit hard facts of evil that form the inevitable counterpart of an existence included in an all-inclusive unitive view. Existence is not always harsh and therefore the rest of the Gita continues in a more normal style.

The next Chapter passes on to the question of the Unitive Contemplation of the Absolute.

ity srīmad bhagavadgītāsūpanishatsu brahmavidyāyām
yogasāstre srīkrishnārjunasamvāde
visvarūpadarsanayogo nāmai 'kādaso 'dhāyah

Thus ends in the Upanishads of the Songs of God, in the Science of the Wisdom of the Absolute, in the Dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, the Eleventh Chapter entitled Unitive Vision of the Absolute.

CHAPTER XII

UNITIVE DEVOTION AND CONTEMPLATION

Bhakti Yoga

A GENERAL discussion of devotion on the usual lines has already been covered in the latter part of the last Chapter. Here an important doubt is raised by Arjuna in regard to two possible kinds of devotion implied in what till now was just called *bhakti* (devotion)

We know that in the rational, heterodox or Buddhistic tradition *bhakti* (devotion) to a personal god was greatly discredited The Gita being a revaluation of both orthodox and heterodox tendencies in spirituality, covering both the rational and the emotional aspects, has to make it clear what importance it gives to the role of devotion in the spiritual progress of the aspirant to wisdom Further, the variety of bipolar relationship which in the Gita is called devotion conforms more to a contemplative discipline rather than to religious worship

We have seen that the more ordinary approaches to devotion have been revalued or superseded in XI, 48 and 53 Discredit on Vedism generally was reflected even in II, 42, 43, 44 and 46 Brahmā as a deity to be worshipped was superseded in XI, 37 There is no mistaking therefore, that when devotion is referred to in this Chapter, the usual forms of *upāsana* (devout worship through ritual, offerings of flowers, etc.) or even popular forms of devotion, are not implied The word contemplation rather than devotion would apply more especially to the type of spirituality of the person implied in verses 13—19 inclusive

Further a *bhakta* (devotee) is portrayed as a detached and dispassionate individual, and wisdom is still his higher goal, as indicated even in verse 12 of this Chapter The attitude of a devotee here shows the same traits of a yogi such as balance between opposites like pleasure pain, etc, as also found in other parts of the Gita The only question that is discussed in this Chapter, which is of particular interest to the author

Vyāsa, consists in the difference between a devotee who thinks of the Absolute as a person, which might cover even the personification of a principle, or the devotee who regards the Absolute in a more theoretical or philosophical manner

Krishna here votes definitely for the personal, as far as a yogi is concerned, but the Chapter contains verses which do recognize the superiority of a person capable of accomplishing the more difficult task of contemplating the Absolute in a more abstract philosophical manner

The attributes of the Absolute in the latter case have to attain a certain globality Component factors must have an organic coherence, thus tending to constitute in their totality a unitive value, and such a value must be contemplated upon in a bipolar manner This bipolarity, as we have said, is the mystical way which is not different from that of yoga, or contemplation The conditions are not consciously fulfilled by rationalists when they think of the Absolute impersonally If their contemplation fulfils these requirements the devotion gains a superior status, as stated in verses 3 and 4 It is only just, therefore, that there is here in verse 5 an apologetic reference to the difficulty facing a man who wants to affiliate himself to the Absolute through mere abstractions

But this apologetic reference to difficulty does not detract from the superior status that such people who can take this difficult path have to be given In fact this recognition is what has been again conceded in the form of a second thought in the last verse of this very Chapter

The Gita is a *yoga sastra*, a reasoned text book on unitive understanding, and although a merely theistic approach is outside its scope, as we have pointed out a certain amount of anthropomorphism is admitted into its general scheme It is a personal Krishna who always represents the Absolute, and as the technique of yoga implies counterparts, one of whom is always a personal devotee, the representation of the Absolute as a person should not be considered as altogether inconsistent

In the context of yoga therefore the element of anthropomorphism implied in the Gita is excusable Such a position does not, however, amount to theism as held by certain scholars today It should be treated as part of the inevitable technique of the practice of the contemplation of the Absolute

Arjuna uvacha

[1] *evam satatayukta ye*
bhaktas tvam paryupasate
ye cha 'py aksharam avyaktam
tesham ke yogavittamah

Arjuna said
Those devotees who worship You, ever unitively, and those again (who meditate on) the Imperishable and the Unmanifested, of them which excels in yoga-knowledge?

The word *evam* (thus) with which this verse begins, is meant to refer backwards to the last verse of the previous Chapter, where a personal surrender of actions to a supreme entity was implied

Bhakti (devotion) is conventionally associated with the worship of gods of mythology or idols especially in India Theistic ideas of God are not foreign to Indian thought, as we found in XI, 43, in referring to the Father of the world but theism free from myth or idolatry is found in religions such as Christianity or Islam Some of the Vaishnavite religions of India do place Vishnu in a supreme hypostatic position resembling a theistic God but the general tendency in Indian thought is to approach God through creation itself more ontologically

The God described in the previous Chapter cannot conform to the pattern of a beneficent Vishnu theistically understood, although Vishnu thought of as an all pervading radiance, could be associated with the vision presented in a secondary fashion The destroyer of the worlds as Krishna described himself to be in the vision could hardly be fitted within the limits of theism proper God does not devour his own children except in the case of a Greek Ouranos But such a god must be considered as belonging more to mythology than to theology

Arjuna puts here a pointed question in which a subtle distinction is implied between one who meditates on a personified God and one who meditates only on impersonal aspects of the *akshara* (Imperishable) and the *avyaktam* (Unmanifested) Both are equally included under the context of yoga and it is only a matter of comparison between them that is here

undertaken as expressed by the phrase *yogavittamah* (best of yoga knowers)

Sribhagavan uvacha

[2] *mayy avesya mano ye mam*
nityayukta upasate
sraddhya parayo petas
te me yuktatama matah

Krishna said
Those with minds entered into Me who unitively meditate on Me, with a fervour pertaining to the Supreme those according to Me are the most unitively (attuned) in yoga

In the answer of Krishna we find two expressions important to note Although both the cases in question are about yogis, what distinguishes the first group is that they are *mayy avesya manah* (with minds entered into Me) In what sense this entering in is to be understood we have already discussed It pertains to the condition of a bipolar reciprocity The other term that distinguishes this first group is the word *sraddha* (fervour faith), which the author takes care to modify at once by the qualification *paraya* (pertaining to the Supreme) Mere religious devotion to an object will not fulfil the requirement in the mind of the author The faith has to refer to something beyond Thus we see that it is as it were a two way traffic as between the worshipper and the worshipped which is insisted upon throughout in this Chapter on devotion or contemplation

When the idea of a personal God becomes more vague or theoretically superior it has to be compensated by a faith that is more fervent When the faith becomes superior through a better philosophical understanding the idea at the other pole has to gain in definiteness of outline Therefore although Krishna here apparently votes definitely in favour of an affiliation to a personal God it becomes qualified by other considerations in this Chapter as we proceed until one is left gasping The true picture of the Absolute intended by the Gita seems to be one that is neither personal nor altogether impersonal

This view is justified especially in the last verse of this Chapter where all others who merely think of a value there referred

When these two aspects of the personal life of the aspirant described in the second case are considered unitively, we can hardly deny that he attains a spiritual status at least equal to that of any *bhakta* (devotee) who might conform to the first type of aspirant The two types tend to coalesce when understood in the proper light of the yoga which is specifically referred to as *yathoktam* (as stated) in verse 20 When properly understood there would remain nothing to choose between the two cases

[5] *klesho 'dhikataras tesham*
avyaktāsakta chetasam
avyaktā hi gatir duhkham
dehavadbhir avapyate

The difficulty of those whose relational minds are set on the Unmanifested is greater, for the way of the Unmanifested is very hard for the embodied to reach

A direct answer to Arjuna's question is not given in this verse Krishna rather chooses to by pass the issue, taking an apologetic attitude, favouring for the present the one devoted to a personal God It is in the name of *klesha* (difficulty) and not in the name of intrinsic superiority that the type of *bhakta* (devotee) is preferred

All devotees are human beings first and yogis afterwards, and there are limitations belonging to bodily existence which set a limit to establishing effective relation with the Absolute. Each man, according to his own temperament, has to draw the line between the transcendental and the immanent aspects of the Absolute for his own purposes of constant meditation Those who by education and training are capable of visualizing the Absolute globally yet impersonally are very rare

[6] *ye tu sarvani karmani*
mayi samnyasya matparāh
ananyenai 'va yogena
mam dhyāyanta upasate

[7] *tesham aham samuddharta*
mrityu samsara sāgarāt
bhavami nachirat partha
mayy avesita chetasam

to as *dharmyamritam* (an eternally righteous value), not necessarily personal, are stated to be surpassingly dear to Krishna

[3] *ye tv aksharam anirdesyam*
avyaktam paryupasate
sarvatragam achintyam cha
kutastham achalam dhruvam

[4] *samniyamye 'ndriyagramam*
sarvatra samabuddhayah
te prapnuvanti mam eva
sarvabhutahite ratah

But those who meditate upon the Imperishable, the Undefineable, the Unmanifested, the All Pervasive and the Thought transcending, the Firmly established, the Immobile, the Constant,

having restrained all sense aggregates, regarding all with equalizing understanding interested in the well being of all creatures, they reach Me too

These verses describe the other variety of spiritual aspirant involved in Arjuna s question No personal God is involved in any of the descriptive terms enumerated

But we note that the word *upasana* (meditate upon) applies equally to such an aspirant as to the worshipper of a personal God It must therefore have a purer connotation than when employed in the context of mere conventional worship Here we have to do with a philosopher whose vision while it is theoretical and abstract is accompanied by a personal attitude involving qualities enumerated in verse 4, such as *samabuddhayah* (those who regard all with equalizing understanding) The counterparts implied in his attitude are firstly, a correct philosophical vision of the Absolute and secondly, a generous and open attitude of free and joyous life among his fellow beings

As Sankara points out, here *upasana* (meditate upon) should be understood in its extended sense He says it ' consists in approaching the object of worship by contemplating it according to the *sastra* (revealed text) and remaining for a long time fixed in the current of the same thought (continuous) like a line of descending oil

or contemplative at the same time, is here brought in more as an exception than as a rule, to head the list of other instances of a lesser order which are to be enumerated presently.

[8] *mayy eva mana ādhatsva*
mayi buddhim nivesaya
nivasishyasi mayy eva
ata ūrdhvam na samsayah

> Place your mind in Me only, let your higher reason enter into Me, you shall without doubt thereafter live in Me.

After citing the rare and perfect case in the last two verses, we come to cases of devotees of lesser grades, who cannot be so easily saved. They are given detailed instructions of choice between alternative courses to follow in contemplative discipline. This continues up to verse 12

In the present verse, we think of the next best type It is one who is capable of placing his mind in and making his faculty of higher reasoning enter into the Absolute. It is evident that even such an operation or adjustment is a difficult one, as is recognised by the author in the next verse.

The *bhakti* (devotion) implied in this verse involves a degree of unity between the worshipper and the worshipped. Even this is rare in the usual context of devotion

[9] *atha chittam samadhātum*
na saknoshi mayi sthiram
abhyāsayogena tato
mām ichchhā 'ptum dhanamjaya

> If you are unable to fix your thoughts steadily on Me, then by means of unitive ascent (yoga of practice) seek to reach Me, O Dhanamjaya (Arjuna)

We come now to a type of devotee capable of establishing a lesser degree of unity with the Absolute The term *sthiram* (steady) indicates that this type wavers and sometimes allows other interests and activities to absorb his attention or time. The remedy recommended is to bring back the straying mind to the Absolute every time it runs away The nature of the practice implied here is evident from vi, 26

But those who worship Me, renouncing all actions in Me, regarding Me supreme, meditating on Me by that yoga exclusive of all else,

for them whose minds have entered into Me, I become ere long, O Partha (Arjuna), the saviour out of the ocean of death and repeated cyclic existences

From verses 6 to 12 we have a graded reference to persons of different temperaments who have several alternatives to choose from, such as knowledge, practice, meditation, renunciation or benefits of actions, etc The alternatives are considered in a certain order and in verses 6 and 7 we have the extremely rare case of a wise yogi who is capable of renouncing all actions in favour of the Absolute This type conforms to what is mentioned in XVIII, 2

The *samnyasin* (renouncer of actions) here represents a thorough going contemplative or yogi with whom no question of having to do anything arises His yoga has the character of being *ananya* (without any extraneous factors) and consists of being wholly absorbed in the Absolute The Absolute itself in such an extreme case may be considered to be that potent factor capable of saving the life of the individual from the relativistic context of death and *samsara* (cyclic repetition of life states) which is here compared to an ocean, because birth and death are like the rising and falling of waves

The expression *mayy avesita chetasam* (those whose minds have entered into Me) applies to this type of wholehearted devotee, and the initiative in the matter of saving such devotees as stated here, devolves on the Absolute There is to be noticed here a wholehearted devotion met by a wholesale hope of salvation the two counterparts of the devotional situation being equalized

A simple *samnyasin* (renouncer of actions) is unlike a *tyagi* (relinquisher of benefits of actions) because in the latter case his renunciation applies only to benefit derived from action and not to action itself

Elsewhere in the Gita (II 5 and 8, XVIII, 11) it has been repeated that it is impossible to relinquish action completely

The distinction of the Gita as a philosophical treatise consists in that it never minimizes the importance of the necessary aspects of life This reference to the extreme type of *samnyasin* (renouncer) devotee who is capable of being a pure meditator

or contemplative at the same time, is here brought in more as an exception than as a rule, to head the list of other instances of a lesser order which are to be enumerated presently

[8] *mayy eva mana adhatsva*
mayi buddhim nivesaya
nivasishyasi mayy eva
ata urdhvam na samsayah

Place your mind in Me only, let your higher reason enter into Me, you shall without doubt thereafter live in Me

After citing the rare and perfect case in the last two verses, we come to cases of devotees of lesser grades, who cannot be so easily saved They are given detailed instructions of choice between alternative courses to follow in contemplative discipline This continues up to verse 12

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The *bhakti* (devotion) implied in this verse involves a degree of unity between the worshipper and the worshipped Even this is rare in the usual context of devotion

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mam ichchha ptum dhanamjaya

If you are unable to fix your thoughts steadily on Me, then by means of unitive ascent (yoga of practice) seek to reach Me, O Dhanamjaya (Arjuna)

We come now to a type of devotee capable of establishing a lesser degree of unity with the Absolute The term *sthiram* (steady) indicates that this type wavers and sometimes allows other interests and activities to absorb his attention or time The remedy recommended is to bring back the straying mind to the Absolute every time it runs away The nature of the practice implied here is evident from VI 26

[10] *abhyāse 'py asamartho 'si*
matkarma paramo bhava
madartham api karmāni
kurvan siddhim avāpsyasi

If you happen to be incapable even for practice, then become one whose every action belongs to Me, the Supreme; even doing work for My sake, you shall attain to perfection.

An even lesser alternative is now given for a man still weaker in devotion. The phrase *matkarma paramah* (one, all of whose actions belong to Me as the Supreme) has been subjected to various interpretations. Abhinavagupta includes within its scope all conventional devotional actions, including the usual ritualistic ones. As we have explained under XI, 55, this expression is one of those peculiar to the Gita. All possible action which a man cannot help doing in the normal course has to be thought of together on the one hand, and on the other hand the totality of such unavoidable necessary action must be treated as belonging to *paramam* (the Supreme) which the Absolute represents.

Thus equated, the evil attached to *karma* (action) becomes neutralized by its necessity or inevitability, and also as belonging to the Absolute; because the Absolute is responsible directly for whatever evil of necessity may be in actions. All nature is good, as Rousseau would put it. By the same principle, all necessary or inevitable action equated to the Absolute, or thought of as belonging to the Absolute, becomes free from any taint.

The allusion to "My action" should be understood in this sense. The Absolute itself has no *karma* (action), but the inevitable, natural and necessary action of the devotee becomes acceptable to the Supreme whose touch may be said to absolve him (as the actor) from any evil in such *karma* (action).

Even if the subtle import of this is not understood by the devotee, the same perfection is promised through an even simpler alternative implied in the expression *madartham* (for My sake), that is, "out of love for Me".

[11] *athai 'tad apy asakto 'si*
kartum madyogam āsritah

sarva karma phala tyagam
tatah kuru yatatmavan

> If you are unable to do even this, then seek refuge (for your individuality) in My unitive (Being), renouncing the benefits of all actions as one of controlled Self

The former verse implied that all necessary and unnatural actions were pruned to make activity as a whole conform to the will, as it were, of the Absolute principle Here a further concession is made in the name of a weakness that is incapable even of omitting unnecessary flourishes in the field of natural activity

What is recommended in such a case is that the devotee should merge his individuality into the larger unitive individuality of the Absolute, however vaguely the devotee may be able to understand such a numinous factor, which is here called *madyogam* (My yoga, My unitive Being) Yoga as applied to the Absolute is a vague term and at best can be thought of as a unitive way of life dedicated to the unitive of the Absolute, wherein the necessary and the contingent aspects of life merge without difference

What happens to a devotee who has effaced his active individuality in this way is that he becomes no more interested in gaining anything for himself as a result of his activity For example, he might engage himself in cultivating a field but he is not keen on seeing that the sale proceeds go into his own pocket to be used for diversions that take his mind away from the Supreme or the Absolute

All that this amounts to is that he effaces his egoistic individuality which reaches out towards objectified values for self gratification *Karma phala tyaga* (renunciation of the benefits of action) should be taken in the sense that means and ends are unitively understood as belonging to the Absolute without egoistic interests, which correspond to the benefits intervening

Nishkama karma (passion freed action) and *karma phala tyaga* (renunciation of the benefits of action) both equally refer to one of the important doctrines of the Gita mentioned as early as II 47 and repeated in V 12 and elsewhere Some commentators interpret this to mean that a man should not have any result in view for the action he undertakes If there is a

disparity between ends and means altogether, the result would be an absurdity Therefore the renunciation of the result or benefit of action, if it is not to lead to absurdities in life, should be understood in the sense that the actor does actions for their own sake which bring natural results Into such a bipolar relationship established between ends and means, the individual craving for pleasures that lie outside his interest in the Absolute, do not enter in as interfering third factors

[12] *sreyo hi jnanam abhyasaj*
jnanad dhyanam visishyate
dhyanat karma phala tyagas
tyagach chhantir anantaram

> Better indeed is knowledge than practice, than knowledge meditation is superior, than meditation, renunciation of the benefit of action—after renunciation—peace

The alternatives given from verses 6 to 11 were based on the motive of easiness In this verse a gradation is indicated which is based on superiority Whether a man worships a manifested God in the form of Vishnu or Rudra, or whether he is capable of meditating on the abstract notion of the Absolute as the Unmanifested, the final criterion by which all devotees have to be measured consists primarily of the question of how far their devotion has brought them happiness or peace

Judged from this normative principle of peace, it is possible to grade and arrange all forms of devotional practice or contemplation as is done here

Blind practice of devotion without knowledge can only be inferior to a devotion that is guided by knowledge It is therefore legitimate that the author has given knowledge primacy over practice Practice covers quite a variety of items from *hatha yoga* (yoga which is forced, involving severe psychophysical disciplines) and ritualistic and religious practices, to the *pranayama* (restraint of vital forces like breath etc), mentioned by Patanjali Even taking the most respectable connotation implied in practice here, as indicated in vi, 26 there is an artificial and mechanistic effort to be made by the devotee to bring back the mind to the subject of meditation Unless the

interest in the subject is intelligent, the effort to bring back the mind constantly would in most cases be futile Therefore primacy is first given to knowledge here

In its turn knowledge cannot be sustained and focussed for a long time uninterruptedly without that element of interest which can give it that oily flow so often referred to which distinguishes meditation from mere thought or knowledge The condition of bipolarity in devotion is better fulfilled in *dhyana* (meditation) and therefore it is given primacy over knowledge

To sustain meditation uniformly and to save it from distractions that might develop at any time, one should have the power to eliminate all those factors that are likely to drag the mind into channels of instinctive desires This implies a certain neutrality in regard to means and ends which is implied in the word *karma phala tyagam* (renunciation of the benefits of action) already explained Whether in the form of such a limited relinquishment of benefit only or in the form of fuller renunciation as implied in verses 6 and 7 earlier the element of giving up of personal interest goes very far in establishing that final value in spiritual life leading to the peace or happiness for the contemplative devotee Thus renunciation has its place higher than meditation because it is by renunciation that peace comes

This verse brings the subject of devotion further in line with the discipline of yoga or contemplation as understood in other Chapters Devotion or practice in the Gita are not to be confused with indications in such texts as the *Narada Bhakti Sutras* and Patanjali s *Yoga Sutras* which should be looked upon as d stinct *darsanas* (systematic visions of reality) of their own with very little in common with the pure contemplation of the Absolute which is implied in this Chapter These *darsanas* have been revalued here

[13] *adveshta sarva bhutanam*
maitrah karuna eva cha
nirmamo nirahamkarah
sama duhkha sukhah kshami

[14] *samtushtah satatam yogi*
yatatma drishanischayah
mayy arpita mano buddhir
yo madbhaktah sa me priyah

He who has no hatred to all creatures, who is also friendly and compassionate, who is free from possessiveness, (mine ness), and egoism, who is equalized in pain and pleasure, and forgiving,

such a unitively disciplined one (yogi) who is always contented, self controlled, firmly resolved, whose mind and reason are dedicated to Me, he, My devotee, is dear to Me

The last section of this Chapter from verse 13 to 19 describes the ideal *bhakta* (devotee) who conforms to a contemplative type, as the Gita understands him We notice at once the difference between the usual devotee in the minds of most people, especially in India, and what is presented here The devotee here is hardly distinguishable from the contemplative mystic or yogi The only trait that marks him out is his retiring nature He is a type who wants to be left alone and at peace with himself

Such a type is hardly one that could be expected to fight with that zeal which is demanded of Arjuna (in the last Chapter) At best he would perhaps conform to the pattern of Socrates fighting for the Athenian city state, familiar to us through Plato s *Symposium*

The difference in style and outlook here can be justified only in the light of the fact that it was again within the parenthetical brackets of Samjaya's words that the inducement to war was recommended by Krishna in Chapter xi Now that the bracket of such a literary device has been effectively closed, when the style after xi, 50, as we have noticed, is again the normal one of the Gita, the toning down here of the personal attitude of the devotee is understandable This section, moreover, does not refer to *bhakti* (devotion) as something to be actively cultivated from the side of the devotee, but rather refers to conformity to the will of the Absolute by which the devotee is said to become dear to the Absolute, as stated in the termination of almost every verse from 13 to 19

The reference in verse 13 to being equalized in pain and happiness does not suggest any more a *bhakta* than a contemplative yogi The principal feature of the yoga of the Gita lies in the concept of *samya* (equalization) as recognized by Arjuna in vi, 33 There is a regular definition of yoga itself as consisting of *samatvam* (equanimity), in ii, 48 Even in Chapter v,

wherein renunciation is the principal theme, we find in verses 19 and 20 the same idea of equanimity or equalization given due importance Thus whether it is action renunciation or devotion, this equalization of two counterparts is a common distinguishing feature of the perfected yogi irrespective of the section of Chapter where it is discussed If we keep this in mind, the rest of this section (verses 13 to 19 inclusive) hardly needs further comment

[15] *yasman no dvijate loko*
lokan no dvijate cha yah
harshamarsha bhayodvegair
mukto yah sa cha me priyah

He who does not disturb (the peace of) the world and (whose peace) is not disturbed by the world, and who is free from exaggerations of joy, haste and fear, he too is dear to Me

The neutrality and lack of exaggeration in the attitude of the *bhakta* (devotee) are referred to here We know in the *Puranas* (religious legends) and in the Indian scene generally that a great place is given to exaggerated emotionalism, from what might be called Lord Lordism or Krishna Krishnaism to ecstasies of joy horripilation or tears all of which pass under the name of *bhakti* (devotion) The Gopis (milk maids) of Brindavan lost themselves in their love for Krishna, which is another form of popular devotion in India coming under erotic mysticism Now, however much such types of emotion may be justified in the context of religious legends or *Puranas* such exaggerated ways of devotion are not at all countenanced in the Gita as definitely expressed in the phrase *harshamarsha bhayodvegair mukto* (free from exaggerations of joy, haste and fear)

Such emotions do have their natural place in the *Puranic* literature of India and *in some of the texts such as the Narada Bhakti Sutras* and even in Patanjali s *Yoga Sutras* where there is reference to *Isvarapranidhana* (worshipping Isvara) as an alter native in yoga In Vedantic literature however *bhakti* (devotion) is referred to by writers like Sankara in the *Viveka Chudamani* (verse 31) as meditation on the Self

All exaggerations are thus discredited on the Gita and even in the *Vishnu Purana* as Radhakrishnan quotes in his

Introductory Essay to *The Bhagavad Gita* (p 65) *Bhaktiratmanusandhanam* (devotion is constant meditation on the Self) is also found as a definition in the *Bhakti Darsana* (Reality Viewed as Devotion) of Narayana Guru's *Darsana Mala* (Garland of Visions of Reality) He adds further that *bhajatityadatmanambhaktirityabhidhiyate* (from meditating on the Self it is called devotion) Though dualism between worshipped and worshipper is recognized by Ramānuja and Madhva, they too give the wisdom of the Absolute an important place in their writings on devotion

Even modern writers like Radhakrishnan who support the idea that the Gita is a religious classic standing for theism, misunderstand the type of *bhakti* (devotion) represented in this Chapter, and give recognition to exaggerated forms of devotion belonging to the *Puranas* and to the context of the erotic mysticism of the milkmaids who fell in love with Krishna Radhakrishnan himself admits that such *bhakti* (devotion) is more natural to women "As a rule," he writes, "the particular qualities associated with bhakti, love and devotion, mercy and tenderness, are to be found more in women than in men As bhakti emphasizes humility, obedience, readiness to serve, compassion and gentle love, as the devotee longs to surrender himself, renounce self will and experience passivity, it is said to be more feminine in character" etc (p 61, Introductory Essay to *The Bhagavad Gita*)

However much such forms of *bhakti* (devotion) might find their place in religious legends, we can confidently say that the Gita discountenances them as is sufficiently evidenced in this Chapter, and especially in this verse which condemns all forms of excitement or exaggeration Moreover in this verse we find the further definition of *bhakti* by which it does not stand out in contrast or relief as something that disturbs the normality of human life A true *bhakta* (devotee) effaces his personality to such an extent that he leaves no mark on his surroundings, and the surroundings on their part take no notice of him

In India at least, ostentatious forms of devotion, especially collectively practised, often express themselves as disturbing elements in social life The love of the Gopis (milkmaids) for Krishna as related in the Bhāgavata, none can deny, created some stir in the life of the simple people of Brindavan judging by the descriptions given We have only to imagine ourselves questioning Yashodha and some of the peasant husbands to find out whether the *bhakti* of the Gopis to Krishna was a disturbing

factor to the people or not! Such devotion cannot therefore be said to fit into the requirements mentioned in this verse

[16] *anapekshah suchir daksha*
udasino gatavyathah
sarvarambha parityagi
yo madbhaktah sa me priyah

He who expects no favours, who is clean, expert, who sits unconcerned, carefree, who has relinquished all undertakings, he My devotee is dear to Me

The epithets *suchi* (clear, clean) and *daksha* (expert) do not suggest the sloppiness or slovenliness which is often condoned in the name of other worldliness or mysticism A man of devotion is not steeped in the negative state of inert ignorance A contemplative is not a hobo type The Gita here discountenances any type of spirituality which does not include being awake to the details of a given situation, without which no one could be described as *daksha* (expert), *i e* a man of *savoir faire*

The epithet *sarvarambha parityagi* (relinquisher of all undertakings) just means that he does not initiate any course of action as a conscious agent He participates in life only, as a boat would go downstream

The expression *anapekshah* (one who expects no favours) indicates his neutral poise in the same way as the other term *udasinah* (one who sits unconcerned) This picture of a contemplative can hardly be made to correspond to what is required of a warrior on the battlefield

[17] *yo na hrishyati na dveshti*
na sochati na kankshati
subhasubha parityagi
bhaktimanyah sa me priyah

He who neither rejoices nor hates nor grieves nor desires, and who has relinquished (both) the beneficial and the harmful, such a one endowed with devotion is dear to Me

Subhasubha parityagi (relinquisher of both the beneficial and the harmful) raises the devotee at once from the merely

ethical and social level to one who is above mere virtues in the usual sense, and makes him conform to the mystical or Upanishadic way of life He should not be confounded with that ostentatious type of devotee who, like the Pharisee, prays in public, or who puts the leaf of the *tulsi* plant (*ocymum basilicum*, the sacred basil of India) which has been distributed from the temple altar, on his ear in order to declare his devotion, and about whom one should beware, according to Sri Ramakrishna.

[18] *samah satrau cha mitre cha*
tathā manāpamanayoh
sitoshna sukhaduhkheshu
samah sangavivarjitah

[19] *tulyanindāstutir maunī*
samtushto yena kenachit
aniketah sthiramatir
bhaktimām me priyo narah

He who is the same to foe and friend, and also in honour and dishonour, who is the same in cold and heat, in pleasure and pain, and who is free from attachment,

to whom censure and praise are equal, who is silent (in manner), content with whatever happens to come, having no fixed abode, mentally constant, such a man of devotion is dear to Me.

These verses supplement the description of the type of contemplative recommended by the Gita When all the different qualifications are put together we get the picture of a man who is at once both a yogi and a *bhakta* (devotee).

There are other sequences of descriptive verses (*e g*, II, 57 *et seq*, XIII, 6 *et seq*, and XIV, 22 *et seq*) which illustrate spiritually advanced types, according to the grades to which they belong Nārāyana Guru cites them when he speaks of different stages of *nirvana* (pure or absolute consciousness, with the "blowing out" of desires) in the last Chapter of his *Darsana Mala* (Garland of Visions of Reality), and such graded types are also mentioned in the *Yoga Vāsishtha* (a compendious textbook on Vedānta, in the form of copiously illustrative stories related by the Guru Vasishtha to the young Rāma, where the

varieties are called *bhumikās* (grounds or steps) The interested reader would profit by a comparative study of these texts

Aniketah sthiramatih (having no fixed abode, mentally constant) is another of those double-edged expressions peculiar to the Gita The lack of constancy in the physical sense is at once counteracted by a constant loyalty to the mental ideal which is here the Absolute, and while the devotee is at home in regard to the Absolute he does not care where his body finds itself lodged All tendency to a closed, static or parochial form of spirituality tends to be abolished by this condition

[20] *ye tu dharmyāmritam idam*
yathoktam paryupasate
sraddadhanā matparama
bhaktas te 'tiva me priyah

> But they who cherish devotedly this righteous immortal value, as stated, endowed with faith, with Me for Supreme, these devotees are exceedingly dear to Me

Here it is *not* the individual devotee conforming to the pattern described in the previous verses who is referred to, but a more general and wider group of persons who legitimately ought to be considered according to the Gita as conforming to the requirements of a devotion of a very high order

The term *yathoktam* (as stated) must refer to all those who have not been covered by the specific reference of the section just concluded Whether this reference includes those of verse 5 who were attracted to the Unmanifested is not explicitly stated, but the type of contemplative in verses 3 and 4 is certainly within the scope of this reference Then the expression *dharmyamritam idam* (this eternally righteous value) gives us an indication of what is implied here Clearly it is not a person that is referred to by the phrase The Unmanifested Impersonal could be conceived by some rare devotees as an immortal value that does not violate the laws of existence or being Such a devotee is given a superior status to all the other types alluded to We see however, in XIV, 27 that this impersonal value referred to here is equated with the absolutist personality of Krishna The idea of an eternally righteous value is treated personally and impersonally indifferently in the Gita

The difficulty mentioned in verse 5 that applies to others does not apply to this rare type of devotee here mentioned by way of rounding off the discussion. By this verse, we see that the Gita does not limit itself to the opinion that only personal devotion can bring a man to the highest form of perfection. In the light of VII, 17, where the man of wisdom is praised, the view that we have taken becomes further justified.

It is usual for people to refer to the head and heart as if to say that what is gained by wisdom is taken away from feeling, implying thereby that the same man cannot be wise *and* kind or devoted at the same time. Swami Vivekananda's favourite saying, in which he contrasts Sankara and the Buddha, the former as having a wise head and the latter as having a warm heart, has influenced the ideas of more than a generation of Vedāntic enthusiasts, both at home and abroad. But according to the present Chapter, it must be sufficiently clear that the devotion which implies peace has its start in wisdom and its main expression in renunciation as stated in XII, 12.

The word *matparamā* (with Me for Supreme) might suggest even in this verse, personal worship, but being a secondary epithet and *upāsana* (worship, cherish) applying primarily to the eternal value, our suggestion that no personality is directly implied here may be justified. Therefore, on final analysis, as stated in this last verse, we find that the Gita gives to the men of philosophic vision even a higher place than to those who conform to the requirements of devotion in their attitudes and ways.

ity srimad bhagavadgītāsūpanishatsu brahmavidyāyām
yogasāstre srikrishnārjunasamvāde
bhaktiyoga nāma dvādaso 'dhyāyah

Thus ends in the Upanishads of the Songs of God, in the Science of the Wisdom of the Absolute, in the Dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, the Twelfth Chapter entitled Unitive Devotion and Contemplation.

CHAPTER XIII

UNITIVE UNDERSTANDING OF THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE ACTUAL AND THE PERCEPTUAL

Kshetra Kshetrajna Vibhaga Yoga

THIS Chapter is concerned with one of the most difficult problems, one which has puzzled not only philosophers and psychologists, but even practical men of affairs Arjuna puts the question under three couples of concepts, one pair being based on the idea of *prakriti* (nature) of which the counterpart in the Samkhya (rationalist) philosophy is the *purusha* (spirit), *another pair is based on the concept of what is here named* *kshetra* (the field), *i e* actuality, and the *kshetrajna* (one who knows the field), *i e* the perceptual counterpart of actuality, while the third pair which belongs more to a subtler philosophical order, *jneyam* (that which is to be known) has its counterpart in *jnanam* (knowledge or wisdom)

In the first place we find that concepts belonging to branches of knowledge which are generally considered widely apart are here seen as brought together for purposes of general treatment of a special kind in keeping with the development of the subject matter of the Gita

The field and the knower of the field may be said to belong to the world of action, the concepts of nature and spirit to the duality implied in Sāmkhya (rationalist) philosophy, and that which is to be known to epistemology whose problems are not to be mixed up with action or nature

We have found that whole Chapters have already been devoted to subjects such as Samkhya (Chapter II), action (Chapter III) and wisdom (Chapter IV) When such an opportunity has been availed of already for dealing with these subjects *in extenso* it may be legitimate to ask why these subjects are now taken again in pairs belonging to each context for a juxtaposed treatment together in one Chapter

The earlier Chapters referred to these subjects only in a preliminary fashion The discussion had to be built up step by step, settling initial doubts and silencing critics We have noticed how, in the middle of the work, in Chapters VIII IX and X, the Gita enunciated and explained its own version of what is explicitly referred to as *adhyatma* (pertaining to the Self, the principle of the Self, *i e* Self science) The peculiarity of these central Chapters, we have noticed, was the perfect neutrality as between the transcendental and the immanent which was maintained in the discussion The Self was a central value around which the notion of the Absolute was developed

At the end of Chapter X, however, the discussion tended to lay a certain stress on the objective evidence of the Absolute on what was called *vibhutis* (unique values) These specific, beneficent, unique values indirectly gave evidence of the spark of the Absolute represented by each specific reality in its own category

By Arjuna's reference in XI, I, to the fact that he had lost all his *moha* (confusion) we should understand that the Gita had done with theoretical discussions regarding the Absolute After that declaration it is natural to assume that he was no more interested in a merely academic or theoretical discussion of the science of the Self At the end of Chapter X he is not even satisfied with the indirect evidence dispersed throughout the world of values where he is asked to recognize the seal of the Absolute

In Chapter XI he prays for and gets a direct vision which is more objectified and even terrible To call it objective is the same as saying it was more positive Any vision must necessarily imply tacitly or explicitly, the principle of duality as between the seer and the seen Thus we find already in Chapter XI a certain duality of treatment necessarily creeping into the style of the Gita This, however is not against the scheme in the mind of the author as we have already pointed out

This duality of treatment becomes more pronounced as we travel further away from the symmetrical centre of the work. In Chapter XII based on the distinction between the object of devotion and the devotee, the personified representative of the Absolute tends to become one distinct pole as against the devotee himself who constitutes the other pole, and *bhakti* (devotion) had to be understood as the establishment of as

intimate a relationship as possible between these poles or counterparts

The counterparts having thus become very distinctly pronounced and inevitable in the treatment thus far, it has become necessary for the author in this Chapter to explain this duality unitively, so that there might not be any misunderstanding when more empirical and pragmatical problems are discussed as we find in later Chapters Although the couplements here discussed belong to different branches of thought, they lend themselves to comparison to reveal the underlying unitive method which has always been present throughout the Gita This is yoga Yoga is the common link running through all the Chapters

The yoga resulting from the compromises of counterparts belonging to the necessary aspects of life was the subject of the earlier Chapters which may be looked upon as being generally negative in character Now that we have come to a discussion of more positive spiritual values in life, they require an " objective " exposition This is exactly what we find in the present Chapter It may be said to centre round *jneyam*—what is to be known The relation between *jnanam* (wisdom) and *jneyam* (what is to be known) or the knower and the known, is one of great philosophical import

In order to show the relation between the knower and the known two other pairs which belong to other branches of wisdom, are here brought together and dealt with side by side That which is to be known is distinct from that which is knowledge, just in the same way as spirit is to be distinguished from nature, and the ' knower of the field " from ' the field " or the conceptual from the actual

All these have a common epistemological principle which this Chapter seeks to expose or clarify The necessary and contingent aspects of life should be properly understood before we can cancel them one against the other so that there can be positive spiritual progress towards higher and higher values by a contemplative wisdom Such is the aim of the present Chapter The high personal values enumerated from verses 7 to 11 inclusive rightly belong to this Chapter because they result from this positive yet unitive wisdom This wisdom is made possible by the equation of the aspects of the Self such as the perceptual and the actual

Verse 0[1]

Arjuna uvacha

prakritim purusham chaiva
kshetram kshetrajnam eva cha
etad veditum ichchami
jnanam jneyam cha kesava

Arjuna said
Nature and spirit, the field and the knower of the field, knowledge (wisdom) and what is to be known, these I should like to know, O Kesava (Krishna)

As in the last Chapter, Arjuna takes the initiative in putting the composite question He has already become theoretically a wise man, but certain positive aspects of wisdom, as already stated in our preliminary remarks to this Chapter, are still the object of his inquiry Knowledge itself as a proper subject requires to be understood as a systematic whole, as belonging to a definite body of philosophic wisdom The word *jneyam* (what is to be known) shows that knowledge is here presented not merely subjectively, but more consciously, positively or objectively

Sribhagavan uvacha

[1] *idam sariram kaunteya*
kshetram ity abhidhiyate
etad yo vetti tam prahuh
kshetrajna iti tadvidah

Krishna said
This body, O Kaunteya (Arjuna), is called the field, and he who knows this, thus they call, who know, the knower of the field

[1] With a view to conformity between different editions and following the example of some other editions we are not including this opening verse in the serial numbering for the reason that the Gita traditionally is supposed to consist of 700 verses. This verse added would make 701 Inasmuch as this verse is of the nature of a title only and could safely be omitted without interfering with the subject matter and as it could have been added as an afterthought by someone other than Vyasa himself its exclusion can perhaps be justified.

There are two definitions here, one of the field and one of the knower of the field These are two different aspects of the same neutral or central Self But they are being distinguished, not for emphasizing their distinctness, but rather to yield a unitive concept of the Self to which both of them belong The implicit duality is retained for purposes of discussion till almost the very end of the work

Before such a unity could be established however, they are, as stated here two distinct concepts This explains the expression *iti tadvidah* (thus they call who know), for the reference is evidently to philosophers like the Samkhyas (rationalists) who recognize this duality between matter and spirit, actual and perceptual

The duality of the Samkhya philosophy, however, has been fully revalued in the Gita, and the two aspects have been brought together into a unitive concept of the Absolute This has been accomplished preliminarily in Chapter II and will be more fully expressed in the present Chapter

The reference to *sariram* (body) in its connotation as employed here, retains a tinge of the dualism which is tentatively per mitted in the present verse but which will be modified in the next verse We should not therefore take the first definition too literally, when it states that the body is the field, although it could be so taken in a plain non revalued Samkhya context In a more unitively understood context, the field forms the counterpart of the knower of the field There has to be something in common between the field and the knower of the field, the actual and the perceptual, before they can be inter related unitively

As understood physiologically, a dead body on a dissection table is very different from a living body Dr Alexis Carrell in his work *Man the Unknown* has recognized this distinction Considered as one of the poles or counterparts in a contemplative situation with which here, in a *yoga sastra* (textbook on unitive understanding), we are primarily concerned the living body attains the status of a personal value belonging to the Self

In the next verse where the field and the knower of the field are to be considered more unitively this revised concept of the body as a value, when kept in mind will help us to avoid many of the doubts such as those raised by a series of questioners belonging to different sceptical schools of philosophy in the commentary of Sankara To take one example, Sankara has

together or separately are expressions used on more occasions than any other two terms in the whole of the Gita Ideologically, the example we have cited earlier of the double injunction in VIII, 7 of "think of Me *and* fight" reveals the same parallel simultaneous treatment of the contingent and the necessary

While the Samkhya (rationalist) philosophers thought of the *kshetra* (field) and the *kshetrajna* (knower of the field) as distinct entities, here we are asked to think of them more unitively as belonging to a centralized value Herein is contained the revaluation which, if we should miss it, would mean losing the whole significance of this Chapter

This unitive way is not unfamiliar to us even in the Upanishads We have the famous passage in the *Isa Upanishad* (11 to 13) where the insistence is very clear on the understanding of the counterparts (knowledge and non knowledge, becoming and non becoming) conjointly, *i e* unitively

The expression *sarvakshetreshu* (in all the fields) implies that delicate paradox which is inevitable to all truly dialectical forms of reasoning The knower of the field (the perceiver), suggests a unity, but when we say he is in every field, it seems to imply at the same time multiplicity Thus unity and multiplicity, the one and the many, are delicately counterpoised, or set one against the other, in this statement, as if to cancel out both in favour of a truly absolutist value It is because of this emergence of an absolutist value from the unitive understanding of the two counterparts that the generalization in the second line which, though it appears as we have said, sweeping at first sight, becomes perfectly justified The Absolute *is* and could *only* be the true subject matter of wisdom

This type of dialectical reasoning was known at the time of Permenides, and Zeno s paradoxes reveal the same method But modern philosophers have tended to discredit pre-Socratic philosophy in the same way as great intellectual stalwarts like Sankara (who in their commentaries have entered into wordy controversy) have missed the delicate methodology of dialectics Sankara preferred to employ a way of reasoning conforming to more mechanistic or formally logical standards This has landed him into many situations bristling with controversy, from whose meshes it is hardly possible for a reader to extricate himself While we agree with his conclusions, most of Sankara's commentary with its hair splitting thus becomes unreadable Even the gentleness of the Socratic method is missing and the

poor critic (the *purva pakshin*) often gets scant respect at the hand of an overpowering polemical giant like Sankara

[3] *tat kshetram yach cha yadrik cha*
yadvikari yatas cha yat
sa cha yo yatprabhavas cha
tat samasena me srinu

(That) hear in brief from Me what the field is what it is like of what it is the modification and whence and which (it is) also what he (the knower of the field) is and what is his specialized resulting expression

Note here in the first place that while this verse refers to the field specifically seemingly with a subtle purpose behind it there is omission of any direct reference by name to the *kshetrajna* (knower of the field) Even in verse 1 we noticed that there was already some hesitation in naming these two counterparts—the field and the knower of the field —attributing their recognition vaguely or elusively to other sages or to sages generally The same sages will be referred to in verse 4

As we study the difference between the two counterparts as stated in the verses that follow we notice also that there is no direct reference to *kshetrajna* (the knower of the field) in verse 11 although it is meant to be implied by the author in the more comprehensive term *jnana* (wisdom) which is there contrasted with ignorance thus by pass ng the concept of *kshetrajna* (the knower of the field) altogether Thus the connotation of the term *kshetrajna* (knower of the field) in verse 3 has already shifted its own centre with a sl ghtly h gher value than what it meant in the init al definit on as d rectly referring to the body We have already po nted out how even there it could not be the body in the sense of a carcase but something that has a value in the context of contemplation in however finite terms it m ght be thought of

Here v e find the field gains its status more by contrast with the ignorance mentioned in verse 11 than w th anything fundamentally its own When we find in verse 6 that the field and its transformat ons include such factors as intelligence and firmness the theoretical status that the field ga ns becomes more accentuated

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Note here in the first place that while this verse refers to the field specifically, seemingly with a subtle purpose behind it, there is omission of any direct reference by name to the *kshetrajna* (knower of the field) Even in verse 1 we noticed that there was already some hesitation in naming these two counterparts—the field and the knower of the field —attributing their recognition vaguely or elusively to other sages or to sages generally The same sages will be referred to in verse 4

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Here we find the field gains its status more by contrast with the ignorance mentioned in verse 11 than with anything fundamentally its own When we find in verse 6 that the field and its transformations include such factors as intelligence and firmness the theoretical status that the field gains becomes more accentuated

We shall see, however, in verses 5 and 6, a very striking difference between the orthodox enumeration of *tattvas* (principles) as belonging to *prakriti* (nature) in the Sāmkhya (rationalist) philosophy, and even from the description of the lower nature of the Absolute as enumerated in VII, 4. We have to look out for a revalued position here wherein a greater unity is established between *prakriti* (nature) and *purusha* (spirit) or between *kshetra* (field) and *kshetrajna* (the knower of the field) than was understood hitherto, whether by the Sāmkhya or even in the earlier Chapters of the Gita itself.

The unitively superior status that the *kshetrajna* (knower of the field) is to gain in this Chapter becomes evident from verse 7 onwards. The enumeration of values there ranges from the simple personal value of humility to wisdom as the highest of absolutist values. The status of *kshetra* (the field) itself (and its modifications) is also seen slightly promoted in the enumeration of items referring to it in verses 5 and 6, beginning from the gross elements, here slightly glorified by the attribute "great" and ending in the personal quality *dhritih* (firmness), which quality is here intended to be superior to *chetanā* (vital intelligence).

When speaking of the attributes of *kshetra* (the field) the term *vikāri* (having modifications, transformations) is used, while the term *prabhāva* (specialized becoming) is used in reference to the superior value connected with wisdom, which corresponds to the knower of the field. Pure knowledge or wisdom knows no transformations, transmutations, evolution or change, but the actual, represented here by the field, being opposed to wisdom, is subject to necessary change and therefore to various modifications or evolution. *Vikāri* (modifications) further has a deprecatory sense suggesting change for the worse.

Yatah (whence) refers to the field, but we find no direct answer is given, except the indirect suggestion in verse 11, that all that is other than wisdom belongs to ignorance. Hence the field results from ignorance, as Sankara ably argues in his long comment on verse 2. Further, Sankara points out that even *avidyā* (ignorance) is an extraneous factor to the *kshetrajna* (knower of the field) who represents, in his words *Isvara* (God) who in his terminology he interprets as being identical with wisdom or the Absolute.

Ignorance, even as an *upādhi* (conditioning factor) in so far as it is capable of affecting the ordinary man's notion of a

pure unconditioned Absolute, must remain, on final analysis, as a limiting attribute to the Absolute To lift the notion of the Absolute too far out of the human context would tend to make of it a mere abstraction which would be of no value It would be a mere philosophical triviality prejudicial to the cause of wisdom But if *we recognize the Absolute, not abstractedly*, but in the sense of a human value however ordinary, this particular form of intellectual difficulty which Sankara had to face could be easily avoided

To the argument of the opponent that all *sastras* (revealed scientific texts) would become useless if the knower of the field was already beyond *samsara* (repeated cyclic existence), Sankara goes as far as to postulate the factor of ignorance as intervening in some sort of figurative or indirect way between the pure absolute God and the ordinary man to whom the *sastras* (revealed scientific texts) apply, as something intermediate which would make these texts necessary for him, almost as in the case of the *dvaitins* (dualistic philosophers) who tend to treat *kshetrajna* (the knower of the field) and *kshetra* (the field) more realistically The introduction of such a third factor on the part of Sankara is rather artificial, and to some extent compromises his unitive stand on the primacy of the pure absolutist *Isvara* (God) If the notion of *Isvara* (God) is conceived, not in terms of a philosophical abstraction, but rather in terms of value, even as knowledge would only be as, according to the *Taittiriya Upanishad* (II, 4—9 inclusive), the term *ananda* (bliss high human value) suggests, then much of the hair splitting caused by *purva pakshins* (anterior sceptics or critics) and the need for explaining figuratively, or having to give indirect meanings to the texts, could be avoided

Regarding the use of the word *prabhava* (specialized resulting expression) when referring to the *kshetrajna* (knower of the field), the term is justified, because the same pure wisdom value could have its more ordinary global and personal expression in common human life

In the series of such human values enumerated in verses 7 to 11 we find an implied scale of such values freedom from conventional pride constituting the lowest rung of the ladder and wisdom itself being implied as the highest Man s consciousness is capable of swinging between this wide amplitude of values, from values of everyday life to those which are rare and unique held by those who have attained to wisdom

The pure dualists such as the followers of Madhva and those who conceive of the Absolute itself as having superior human attributes, like the *visishtadvaitins* (those who treat non dualistically even specialized expressions of the Absolute) of the Ramanuja school, would then have no room for saying that Sankara finds no use for all the scriptures Without degrading the Absolute into the status of a *samsarin* (one tainted with mundane considerations) it is possible to conceive of a wide range of human values in whose under standing and adoption the ordinary human being would find valuable indications in all the valid scriptures of the world

[4] *rishibhir bahudha gitam*
chhandobhir vividhaih prithak
brahmasutrapadais chai 'va
hetumadbhir vinischitaih

Sung by *rishis* (seers) in many ways, severally and distinctly in (different) metres, and also in the aphoris tic words of the *Brahma Sutras* replete with critical reasonings and positively determined

The object of this verse is to emphasize the subtle nature of the problem involved in the question of the relation of *kshetra* (the field) and *kshetrajna* (the knower of the field) It is suggested here that the subject is one which has agitated the minds of *rishis* (seers) and other philosophers even from the most ancient times They have advanced their opinions in the form of ancient chants not necessarily Vedic There have been heterodox seers like Brihaspati Kapila and others who have composed verses in exalted mystical style which would justify the term *gitam* (song) used here

The reference to *chhandobhir* (through a variety of metres) is to emphasize the different contexts and styles including those of the *Rig Saman* and *Yajus* Vedas which are known to be in different styles or metres The expression *vividhaih* (various) suggests the large variety of such literature extant The expres sion *prithak* (severally distinctly) indicates that there is no uniform agreement on this subject between the sages The Samkhya (rationalist) philosophers for example by their dualistic approach, differ from the true Upanishadic stand point

The compliment is here paid to the precise and well-reasoned presentation found in the aphorisms of the *Brahma-Sutras* (sequence of aphorisms dealing with the wisdom of the Absolute) which is evidently, as most scholars now agree, that composed by Bādarāyana, another name for Vyasa, to whom the Gita itself is attributed

By the expression rishi i e the sages of this verse, there is a reference back to verse 1 *tadvidah* (those who know) A similar reference is found in IV, 2, where the *rajarishis* (king-philosophers) are more specifically alluded to The reference there is also to a form of ancient dialectical wisdom which Krishna deplores has been lost by the great lapse of time

We see in the Gita that a high value is attached to a certain rare kind of wisdom which tends to get lost from time to time in the history of mankind The *paramam guhyam* (supreme secret) in XI, 1 and the concluding reference in XVIII, 63 to *guhyad guhyataram* (more secret than all other secrets), taken together with the high status given to wisdom in the present verse, is unmistakable in determining the teaching of the Gita

[5] *mahabhutany ahamkaro*
buddhir avyaktam eva cha
indriyani dasai 'kam cha
pancha che 'ndriyagocharah

[6] *ichchhā dveshah sukham duhkham*
samghatas chetana dhritih
etat kshetram samasena
savikaram udahritam

The great elements, ego-sense, reason, and also the Unmanifest, the ten senses, and the one (mind) and the five conceptual aspects of the senses,

wish-dislike, pleasure-pain, the organic aggregation, vital intelligence, firmness this in brief, is the field, with modifications named

The items of existing entities and derivatives from them both belonging to the legitimate context of contemplation, which are enumerated here, reveal a marked difference from the usual way in which factors of existence of personal virtue are generally expounded

The pure dualists such as the followers of Madhva and those who conceive of the Absolute itself as having superior human attributes, like the *visishtadvaitins* (those who treat non-dualistically even specialized expressions of the Absolute) of the Ramanuja school, would then have no room for saying that Sankara finds no use for all the scriptures Without degrading the Absolute into the status of a *samsarin* (one tainted with mundane considerations) it is possible to conceive of a wide range of human values, in whose understanding and adoption the ordinary human being would find valuable indications in all the valid scriptures of the world

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and therefore perfected model of a spiritual man that we can expect to be portrayed in this Chapter, Sankara's opinion that the reference here is to a *samnyasin* (renouncer) need not be considered, however, too far off the mark

The detachment even from wife and home mentioned in the next verse further confirms that a model of a *samnyāsin* (though not necessarily the conventional institutional type), is implied in the description here The pessimistic note is clear in the second line of this verse, where there is specific reference to *duhkha* (suffering) as the principal thing to be avoided, coming from birth, death, old age and disease.

[9] *asaktir anabhishvangah*
putra dara grihadishu
nityam cha samachittatvam
ishtānishtopapattishu

without clinging to, (and) without intensely-involved attachment to, (relations such as) sons, wives, (and property such as) houses, and having a constant neutral mental attitude in respect of desirable and undesirable happenings,

This verse reflects an attitude of general neutrality towards happenings as well as towards domestic or family relations, besides not being attracted by common interests such as wealth, etc The attitude to wife and children referred to here does not imply that he is purposely unjust to them or partial either He takes an impersonal neutral attitude in the matter, balancing justly between the two opposing tendencies that might influence his judgment He never errs on the side of partiality to his own blood-relations

[10] *mayi chā 'nanyayogena*
bhaktir avyabhichārinī
viviktadesa sevitvam
aratir janasamsadi

devotion to Me to the exclusion of everything extraneous, and never straying from the (direct) path, preference to dwell in a place apart, distaste for crowded living,

mystic. A man concerned with his emancipation or self-realization is hardly concerned with what society thinks of him. His moral norms are within the categorical imperatives of his own true nature.

The second epithet, *adambhitvam* (unpretentiousness), implies the same principle of integrity or being true to oneself. As a corollary to the same self-sufficient attitude, he never wants to interfere with the happiness of any being around him. A universal generosity here called *ahimsā* (non-hurting) is implied in this kind of self-sufficiency.

Kshanti (non-retaliating forbearance) is also a leave-me-alone attitude which ignores society. *Ārjavam* (straightforwardness) implies a certain frankness which speaks out without fear or favour, and which also shows independence from popular approbation. Then instead of having social considerations, he is affiliated to a superior model of a wise person, here referred to as an *āchārya* (teacher) *Saucham* (purity) refers not only to freedom from actual dirt, but from anything tending to depress or tarnish the state of the spirit

Sthairyam (steadfastness or constancy) means he does not change his way of life in favour of values other than the contemplative *Ātmavinigrahah* (state of self-withdrawal) suggests the stage of *pratyāharah* (withdrawal) of Patanjali Here it is sufficient to give it the simpler meaning that outgoing tendencies are restrained and directed to the Self

[8] *indriyārtheshu vairagyam*
anahamkara eva cha
janmamrityu jarāvyādhi—
duhkhadoshānudarsanam

detachment in respect of sense-interests, absence of egoism, insight regarding the pain and evil of birth, death, old age, and disease

This verse comes nearest to the description of a *samnyāsin* (renouncer) which Sankara believes is implied in the whole of the description of personal traits taken together A pessimistic note implied here might be the heritage of the previous Buddhistic outlook Although according to VI, 17, and other verses, it would not be in keeping with the general spirit of the Gita to give a stoically exaggerated meaning to the reference to suffering (*duhkha*) here in view of the more positive

ahamkara (individuality) which refer to the personal consciousness more directly All the items enumerated in verse 5 may be said to represent the field more directly than their deriva tives enumerated in verse 6 The latter have some resemblance to the lists of *abhibuddhis* (apprehensions) and *karmayonis* (source of activity) listed in the *Tattva Samasa* already mentioned, and some scholars have suggested on the other hand that *chetana* (vital intelligence) and *dhritih* (firmness) etc, correspond to *avidya* (ignorance) and *asmita* (am ness)

At very first sight it is evident that the items in verse 6 are to be taken in pairs, wish with its opposite dislike, pleasure with pain, while *samghatah* (organic aggregation) is capable of being coupled with *chetana* (vital intelligence), because organic integration is a counterpart of vital intelligence

The last item *dhritih* (firmness) might be said to mark the culmination of the integration or the holding together of opposing tendencies constituting the individuality in a human being Thus unitive firmness is meant to be treated here as important in human life This leads to the firm justice" referred to in the very last verse of the Gita

[7] *amanitvam adambhitvam*
ahimsa kshantir arjavam
acharyopasanam saucham
sthairyam atmavinigrahah

Freedom from conventional pride unpretentiousness, non hurting, non retaliating forbearance straightfor wardness, loyal support of the teacher (*acharya*) purity, steadfastness and state of self withdrawal,

We come to a description of the knower of the field which, as we have explained is here indirectly referred to as forming the essence of *jnanam* (wisdom)

Verses 7 to 11 form a natural section Items here range from such factors as lack of pride to that supreme value called wisdom Some of these are not fundamentally different from what one might call moral virtues But in principle they have nothing in common with such social values at all

If, for example we should take the very first item mentioned, *amanitvam* (freedom from conventional pride) it is a pure virtue, if it could be so called belonging to a source different from that of society It is the virtue of a contemplative or

If we should try to relate these backwards to the Sāmkhya (rationalist) philosophy to which at first sight they reveal a general kinship, we find that there is no strict agreement between the factors enumerated. In the first place the order here has been mixed. Whether such a transposition is due to requirements of prosody merely is not quite clear. Moreover, under *kshetra* (the field) which may be said to correspond to the *prakriti* (nature) side of the Sāmkhya system, we have in verse 6 a new set of factors like *chetanā* (vital intelligence) and it is not clear whether they belong to the orthodox Sāmkhya system or to the Yoga counterpart of the same dualistic school.

A reference to a similar series of higher and lower values was made in III, 42. Further in V, 4 and 5 a sweeping abolition of the distinction between Sāmkhya (rationalist philosophy) and Yoga (unitive individualist philosophy) was made. In VII, 8 the principle of the Absolute was said to be implied in the *rasa* (taste) of water. Earlier, in verses 4 and 5 of the same Chapter the two aspects of the nature of the Absolute were similarly mentioned as here, but with a striking difference in the number of items. *Prakriti* (nature) and *purusha* (spirit) were referred to there as the lower and higher aspects of the Absolute. When we consider that between the *Sāmkhya Kārika* (Outline of Rationalist Philosophy) of Isvarakrishna attributed to Kapila, and the reputedly earlier work mentioned by Max Muller, bearing on the Sāmkhya system itself, called the *Tattva Samāsa* (Assemblage of Principles of the Sāmkhya System) it is not at all easy to determine with exactitude which items enumerated here would correspond to the ones enumerated in these works, or anteriorly in the Gita itself. Without confounding ourselves with such an inquiry at present, we shall merely see what meaning, in keeping with the context here, we can extract from these items as here enumerated.

We find that the series starting with *mahā-bhūtas* (great elements) refers to ontological realities such as the earth, water, etc. This is but legitimate, because the field has been primarily designated as the decaying body in verse 1, implying all its grossest actualities. The series in verse 5 ends with the five conceptual aspects of the senses (the *tanmātras* of the Sāmkhya system)—sound, touch, sight, taste and smell. These depend for their reality on our own consciousness. The senses themselves represent the windows of consciousness.

In between these two extremes, the ontological and the conceptual, are placed factors such as *buddhi* (intelligence) and

and therefore perfected model of a spiritual man that we can expect to be portrayed in this Chapter, Sankara s opinion that the reference here is to a *samnyasin* (renouncer) need not be considered, however, too far off the mark

The detachment even from wife and home mentioned in the next verse further confirms that a model of a *samnyasin* (though not necessarily the conventional institutional type), is implied in the description here The pessimistic note is clear in the second line of this verse, where there is specific reference to *duhkha* (suffering) as the principal thing to be avoided coming from birth, death, old age and disease

[9] *asaktir anabhishvangah*
putra dara grihadishu
nityam cha samachittatvam
ishtanishtopapattishu

without clinging to, (and) without intensely involved attachment to, (relations such as) sons wives (and property such as) houses, and having a constant neutral mental attitude in respect of desirable and undesirable happenings,

This verse reflects an attitude of general neutrality towards happenings as well as towards domestic or family relations, besides not being attracted by common interests such as wealth, etc The attitude to wife and children referred to here does not imply that he is purposely unjust to them or partial either He takes an impersonal neutral attitude in the matter, balancing justly between the two opposing tendencies that might influence his judgment He never errs on the side of partiality to his own blood relations

[10] *mayi cha nanyayogena*
bhaktir avyabhicharini
viviktadesa sevitvam
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devotion to Me to the exclusion of everything extra neous, and never straying from the (direct) path, preference to dwell in a place apart distaste for crowded living,

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[10] *mayi cha 'nanyayogena*
bhaktir avyabhichārini
viviktadesa sevitvam
aratir janasamsadi

devotion to Me to the exclusion of everything extraneous, and never straying from the (direct) path, preference to dwell in a place apart, distaste for crowded living,

Here is a culminating reference to the special kind of bipolar relation which, we have often said, constitutes one of the central doctrines of the Gita. It may be called *ekāntika-bhakti-yoga* (the unitive way of lone devotion) which scholars have distinguished as the characteristic of the Bhāgavata religion of Vāsudeva. We have explained already the import of the word *ananyayoga* (the unitive way which excludes everything extraneous).

The *bhakta* (devotee), moreover, should not deflect from the path which joins him contemplatively with the Absolute in a most direct or strictly bipolar fashion. The two other qualifications of the yogi or *samnyāsin* (renouncer) here refer to his preference for quiet surroundings with nothing obtruding into or disturbing his peace. He generally avoids crowds or living in the market-place. His peace of mind is further secured by a type of place described here as *viviktadesa* (a place apart) where petty rivalries and social feuds do not interfere. Sankara thinks that the place must be free from snakes and thieves.

[11] *adhyātmajnāna nityatvam*
tattvajnānārtha darsanam
etaj jnānam iti proktam
ajnānam yad ato 'nyathā

everlasting affiliation to the wisdom pertaining to the Self, insight into the content of philosophical wisdom—this is declared to be wisdom; whatever is other than this is ignorance.

In this verse which is added after the culminating reference in the previous verses, we find that in conformity with XII, 20, a model of a man who does not think in terms of a personal affiliation to Krishna, but who is merely affiliated to the supreme wisdom-value, is given ultimate recognition, over and above the praise given to the personal affiliation to Krishna referred to in the last verse. This may be said to mark the culminating model belonging to the more specific framework of the Gita teaching as part of a Bhāgavata religion. It leaves the door wide open for others here who are votaries at wisdom's pure altar alone.

The wisdom here refers to the Self as implied in the first epithet, and at the same time is conceived in positive or objective terms as implied in the second epithet. The *jnānam*

(wisdom) referred to in the second line should be taken to be *the* true knowledge of verse 2 and as substituting the notion of *kshetrajna* (knower of the field) which has been conveniently forgotten, as we have pointed out

This culminating wisdom is a unitive factor covering both the field and the knower of the field It is as it were a central value which may even be said to be implicit in the word *antaram* (principle of difference, differential) in the last verse of this Chapter and which, as stated there, is to be discerned by the *jnanachakshushah* (eye of wisdom)

Under *ajnana* (ignorance), similarly, there is to be implied all those aspects of the field which lead the consciousness away from higher wisdom values, including both those that tend to do so, and those falling outside the scope of contemplation altogether, such as the decaying aspects of a dead body, wherein no soul happiness is any more to be enjoyed

In reviewing the section covered from verses 5 to 11 inclusive, in which both the idea of the field and the knower of the field were covered in a special and unitive way which we have tried to explain, we find that beginning from the idea of a body which was only superior to a mere carcase by a margin of contemplative principle involved, we have touched in the knower of the field an all comprehensive wisdom value which is going to be expounded more finally in verse 12, by way of rounding up the section, as we shall see

We further notice that even within the items belonging to the field there is an implied gradation of values culminating in the qualification *dhritih* (firmness) in verse 6 A vertical series of values relating to action, somewhat on the same lines as the series here, is given in XVIII, 14

In the present verse an integrated organism which constitutes the personal value called the field is the basis where higher virtues can be cultivated or erected The vital intelligence leads to a personal quality called firmness here, which is not unrelated to the idea of *urjitam* (vigour) of X, 41 It suggests both stability and strength and, as a personal quality, marks the furthermost limit which perfection in the context of the field can attain Firmness represents the narrow neck of the hour glass structure of the values presented from the most broad based ones of the great elements at the bottom of the lower cone to this pointedly personal virtue of firmness at the central apex Beyond this point we reach up to other personal virtues of a non social and individualistic character which are

also of the nature of personal virtues, but which really belong to the domain of *kshetrajna* (the knower of the field).

Instead of *pravritti* (forward-going tendencies) we come to what is represented by *nivritti* (inwardly retreating tendencies). Egoism, for example, is a recognized value under *kshetra* (the field) in verse 5, and has its place, while the same *ahamkāra* (egoism) is a value to be negated to constitute a personal virtue of the *kshetrajna* (knower of the field) in verse 8.

Scanning the series we find that the values become more and more generally applicable in the later verses, as we ascend the scale or rise into the region of the upper expanse of the hour-glass, where universal values such as wisdom are comprehended.

The legitimate doubt that might arise in the reader regarding the validity of referring to virtues as leading to wisdom, as they might be mistaken to be, to which Sankara makes allusion, is explained at least partially, by our analogy of the hour-glass. Whether universal or particular value-factors are involved in the scale of values enumerated, it is the person or the individual who is primarily concerned with them. Thus a reference to the individual as representing the values which necessarily have to resemble personal virtues is but legitimate and natural. All values have to be conceived at least in the contemplative context as personal values, because personal liberation or self-realization is the end common to all contemplative disciplines.

The question of Sankara's opponent, raised in connection with the next verse, of how a virtue can be a means for wisdom, is only answered in an indirect way by Sankara when he says that these virtues or qualifications are conducive to wisdom, or because they are secondary or auxiliary causes of wisdom, they are treated on a par with wisdom itself. From the way we have approached the problem by giving primacy to value rather than to abstract wisdom as such, this indirect explanation becomes unnecessary. Every item in the series has an equal status as a value, whether personal or merely philosophical.

Sankara's other explanation of the charge of his opponent that the *kshetrajna* (knower of the field) would either be a *samsārin* (one of mundane interests) or there would result the absence of *samsāra* (the cycle of repeated existences) at all, depends upon an argument based upon infinite regression, by which he tries to explain that if attributes of relative existence are to be applied to *Īsvara* (God) or to the *kshetrajna* (knower

of the field), we would thereby be compelled to postulate an author of consciousness who would be able to see the ego so tainted as an object or entity outside himself This would necessitate a series of egos, one superior to the other, the more superior one being able to make of the inferior one an object of its perception, and so on *ad infinitum* By the absurdity implied in such an infinite regression, Sankara succeeds in establishing, though in a laboured way, the unconditioned purity implied in the *kshetrajna* (knower of the field) which fully represents *Isvara* (God) or Vishnu as he specifically says

Vishnu could only be a supreme value, when stripped of mythological vestures, with which in his mind the common man might clothe the value Thus conceived as a human value entering into different levels of human life, this laboured resort of Sankara to a regression to infinity, together with his arguments based on indirect or *lakshanartha* (figurative meanings), could easily have been by-passed

[12] *jneyam yat tat pravakshyami*
yaj jnatva 'mritam asnute
anadimat param brahma
na sat tan nā sad uchyate

I shall declare that which is to be known, which, being known, one gains immortality, the beginningless, having Me as its supreme culminating factor, the Absolute, which is said to be neither existence nor non existence

From this verse onwards we have a complete picture of the unitive Self or the eternal Absolute or whatever may be designated by *tat* (That) It is unmistakable from the description that it is not an entity which could be definitely called either matter or spirit. As stated in verse 19, both matter and spirit have to be given an equal status as values and considered as eternal or beginningless. The Absolute implied here in verse 12 is neither *sat* (existence) nor *asat* (non-existence), and is of the nature of a paradox, in the same way as in the Eleatic philosophers, Parmenides and Zeno The one and the many adhere together in this notion of the Absolute, as stated in verse 30

When it is said that the Absolute participates in both existence and non-existence, and the one and the many, it

should not be thought however, that it combines contradictions, reducing the notion to a mere absurdity. It should be conceived rather as valid as a datum of reasoning, or better still as an authentic human value to be intuitively understood, and not as a mere contradiction in terms as *bhedābheda vādins* (difference-non-difference thinkers) would tend to look upon it.

The reference to immortality in this verse is only to emphasize the correctness or validity of the revalued, restated notion of the Absolute implied here. It corresponds to the "verily, verily" of the New Testament, while the word *pravakshyāmi* (I shall declare) also corresponds to the "I say unto you" of the same. The latter should be read with *me srinu* (hear from Me) of verse 3. These all indicate that Krishna has something unusually precious to say.

The word *jneyam* (what is to be known) marks the positive nature of the notion of the Absolute to be described in this Chapter, giving it a certain amount of philosophical objectivity. The phrase *anādimatparam* (beginningless and having Me as its supreme culminating factor) has been subjected to differences of interpretation and treatment by important commentators like Sankara and Rāmānuja, the former taking it as *anādimat-param* (beginningless, supreme) and the latter as *anādi-matparam* (beginningless, ruled by Me). Both these interpretations have something to be said in their favour. In the light of the essential paradoxical nature of the Absolute as we have shown, the different interpretations are but natural. But it is important (on whichever the accent is put, on beginningless or on supreme) that we steer clear of any such duality in understanding the meaning of the term. In other words we have to conceive of it as a neutral value as it is clearly intended to be in the description given in the rest of the Chapter.

[13] *sarvatah pānipādam tat*
sarvatokshi siromukham
sarvatah srutimal loke
sarvam āvritya tishthati

With hands and feet everywhere, with eyes and hands, and mouths, with hearing everywhere, in the world, That remains, enveloping all.

Verses 13 to 18 form a new section wherein various paradoxical statements about the Absolute are included in a certain order.

In verse 13, which is the same as that of the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* III. 16, the Vedic picture of a cosmic man is repeated in the form revalued in the Upanishads The paradox is implied in the expression *sarvam avritya* (enveloping all) The term, *loke* (in the world) on the other hand, would suggest an inside position. The same paradox is more explicitly stated in verse 15.

[14] *sarvendriya gunabhāsam*
sarvendriya vivarjitam
asaktam sarvabhrich chai 'va
nirgunam gunabhoktri cha

Shining by the specific characters of the senses, devoid of all sense (attributes), unattached, supporting all, without qualities, and perceiving qualities

This verse contains three paradoxical statements The first is quite within the range of our own experience, when we think of dreaming, where things are seen without the help of eyes, etc. The second paradox is easily understood if we think of space supporting form Regarding the third paradox, we know that the pure Absolute is not subject to the modalities of the three degrees of specialization in nature called the *gunas* (qualities). They act only as conditioning factors, like Shelley's " dome of many-coloured glass ".

[15] *bahir antas cha bhūtānam*
acharam charam eva cha
sukshmatvāt tad avijneyam
durastham cha 'ntike cha tat

Without and within beings, immobile and mobile too, because subtle That is unknowable, That stands far and near also

Here again there are three paradoxes to be resolved They are quite clear and require no explanation. The Absolute is referred to as being a subtle principle This is an initial attempt to explain the paradoxes and would correspond to the argument advanced in verse 32

[16] *avibhaktam cha bhuteshu*
vibhaktam iva cha sthitam

bhutabhartri cha taj jneyam
grasishnu prabhavishnu cha

And undivided, yet remaining divided as it were in beings, supporter of existence and That which is to be known, holding back and releasing for expansive becoming

Again three paradoxes are implied, two explicit and one hidden In the first explicit one, the word *iva* (as it were) is meant to relieve the contrast somewhat The paradox of the one and the many is meant, although it is expressed in terms of outward appearances

The second paradox here has the implied opposition between the counterparts *bhutabhartri* (supporter of existence) and *jneyam* (what is to be known) which in this Chapter should be understood as an objective philosophical entity to be clearly placed in a circle apart, as it were, from *jnanam* (wisdom), subjectively considered The opposition between the two counterparts is the same as that between existence and subsistence

The third pair of paradoxical counterparts is based on the notion that there is a centrifugal and a centripetal principle involved in reality, whether cosmic or psychic *Grasishnu* (grasping) refers to the centripetal tendency to hold inwards, and *prabhavishnu* (releasing expansive becoming) is the centrifugal tendency

This verse thus terminates the series of paradoxical references which are all meant as examples of the principle of equalization, neutralization, or cancelling out of counterparts or tendencies into a neutral central value which is the Absolute As in mathematics, the operation can be compared to the cancelling out of the plus and minus or the unitive cancellation in vulgar fractions of the numerator and the denominator This kind of equalization, which can also be thought of as peace, harmony or joy, is of the essence of yoga Indeed, yoga *is* equalization, even by the Gita definition, as we have had many occasions to point out

[17] *jyotisham api taj jyotis*
tamasah param uchyate
jnanam jneyam jnanagamyam
hridi sarvasya dhishthitam

The Light even of lights, That is said to be beyond darkness, knowledge, the knowable and what is to be reached through knowledge, particularly located in the hearts of everyone

Here instead of reference to two counterparts we find three items referring to the Absolute These must be looked upon as corresponding to the *triputi* (tri basic) aspect of consciousness Wisdom and the object of wisdom here correspond to the subjective and the objective aspects of knowledge which are counterparts belonging to the same order as the field and the knower of the field But the third factor referred to here by the phrase *jnanagamyam* (that which is to be reached through wisdom) stands neutrally between subject and object

Between an onlooker and a lamp there is the neutral value called light which is neither subjective nor objective, but is arrived at by virtue of both eye and lamp It can thus be compared to a central value Legitimately, therefore, there is reference here to the Light of lights which is located neutrally, as it were, in the hearts of men, as a superior basic human value

This kind of light is not the ordinary light which is opposed to darkness, but light conceived in itself and in a more absolutist manner darkness itself being overlooked as a negation to be negated The double use of Light of lights here is justified because of the double negation of darkness implied A double assertion replaces a double negation This is a subtlety known to mystical theology and methodology in the writings of Aquinas and Dinoysius the Aeropagite This image is also resorted to in the Upanishads

We note also in passing that this third factor mentioned in this verse may possibly refer to the *antaram* (differential principle) of verse 34

[18] *iti kshetram tatha jnanam*
jneyam cho ktam samasatah
madbhakta etad vijnaya
madbhavayo papadyate

Thus the field and wisdom and what has to be known, have been briefly told My devotee having known this, attains to My state of being

How a man of wisdom who merely knows what has been stated, could, by that mere fact, as it is said, enter into the being of the Absolute, is not against the spirit of the dictum of the *Mundaka Upanishad* III, ii. 9: "He verily, who knows that supreme Absolute, the Absolute Itself becomes." Although the more theologically-minded commentators would hesitate to give full credit to this statement, it holds good in principle.

Notice in this verse again that a reference to *kshetrajna* (knower of the field) is omitted for reasons already explained.

[19] *prakritim purusham chai 'va*
viddhy anādī ubhāv api
vikārāms cha gunāms chai 'va
viddhi prakritisambhavān

Know you that nature and spirit are both beginningless; and know you also that modifications and their intrinsic modalities are born of nature.

After seemingly closing a section with verse 18 in which the answers to the three sets of questions of Arjuna were expressly concluded, we have here another extra section covering verses 19 to 22 inclusive, whose object is to bring out the subtle inter-relation that exists between what is here called *prakriti* (nature) and *purusha* (spirit). Verse 21 incidentally makes allusion to the principle that underlies birth in "good or evil" wombs. The object of this section is to develop a philosophy by which the human personality could be understood not only in its general aspects but also in those particularized aspects which would help us to distinguish a Peter from a Paul.

The theory of the three modalities in nature which is to be discussed in detail in the next Chapter under the three *gunas* called *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* is to be the basis of the determination of types of persons. We shall come to a fuller discussion of the implications of this theory of *gunas* in its proper place in the next Chapter and elsewhere, and see how the four social divisions emerge again to view as based on these *gunas*, in Chapter XVIII, 41 ff.

Here in the present verse we have to notice that matter and spirit are given an equal status by virtue of the eternity implicit in the intrinsic nature of both. If Peter and Paul are different the difference is due to the *guna* which enters into the nature of each of them tending to modify their original pure nature.

We know that this question of psycho physical interaction is full of vague and subtle implications In other parts of the Gita this subtle nature of the question has been referred to as in xv, 10 and 11 In the unitive treatment of nature and spirit here we are asked in this section to recognize that although these two are distinct it is from their interaction as equal and opposite eternal factors that various grades, even within the human species result It would help our later discussion of the fourfold social division in Chapter xviii to note even here that it is not the spirit but only nature which is responsible for the inequalities of birth The status of man remains therefore untouched by the modalities of nature, giving all men spiritual equality outside the relativist domain of nature

[20] *karya karana kartritve*
hetuh prakritir uchyate
purushah sukhaduhkhanam
bhoktritve hetur uchyate

In what concerns agency for cause and effect the motivating factor is said to be nature in the matter of the experiencer of pleasure and pain the motivating factor is spirit

In getting at the root of the statement in this verse we have to examine it from a very matter of fact point of view The dividing line between the actual and the perceptual implied here is very thin *Prakriti* (nature) and *purusha* (spirit) are again referred to here as dual aspects of reality the aim being to explain in an empirical or practical way where mind and matter meet to result in personal types referred to in verse 21

The values pertaining to the mind are necessarily distinct from those pertaining to matter It would be vain to deny their necessary difference A stone must hit a mango fruit to make it fall Only a magic mango will fall by a magic spell In this and many popular proverbial instances the distinction between the actual and the perceptual has prevailed as commonsense wisdom

We have already done with the philosophical implications of this wisdom and the only object that the author has in referring to nature and spirit here is to reveal that subtle dividing line which demarcates them

The first compound word *kāryakāranakartrtve* (in what concerns agency for cause and effect) has another reading *kāryakaranakartrtve* (in what concerns agency for effect and instruments). In the latter case the *karana* (instruments) are factors producing the effect called the body (*i.e.* in Sāmkhya; the five organs of sensation, the five of activity, mind, intelligence and egoism). Both these versions have been subjected to critical examination by Sankara. Without going into the technical details involved, we can see how this verse is beautifully conceived by the author to serve the main purpose of dividing nature and spirit as practical counterparts in an empirically valid theory on the basis of which personal types and aptitudes could be discussed. We need not, therefore, enter into the profound philosophical implications here. The same problem is more closely tackled in the next verse where the question of rebirth and "good and evil" wombs is expressly mentioned

Here we find the two *hetu-s* (motivating factors) each given an almost equal status, the motivating factor of nature and that of spirit The motivating factor of nature is behind all causes and effects that we see in this mechanistic world. Similarly, in what we know in the everyday world as pleasure and pain, the motivating factor belongs to one who can feel such pleasure and pain, here named *purusha* (spirit). Thus the thin dividing line that is sought to be explicitly defined by this verse lies between the conscious spirit which is capable of feeling, and the inert matter which is within the domain of causality, and which does not necessarily imply a selective or aesthetic consciousness.

We should, therefore, make the distinction between *hetuh* (motivating factor) and the *kārana* (cause) associated with *karya* (effect). *Hetuh* (motivating factor) is more unitively conceived than cause-effect which depend upon one another for their meaning as counterparts of a mechanistic situation. Further, cause and effect can belong to the field of *vikrti* (deteriorating effects) while *prakrti* (nature) as a more general *hetuh* (motivating factor) includes both good and bad effects

[21] *purushah prakrtistho hi*
bhunkte prakrtijan gunān
kāranam gunasango 'sya
sad asad yoni janmasu

> The spirit, seated in nature, appreciates the modalities born of nature, association with the modalities is the cause of births in good or evil wombs

This verse is an attempted explanation of the process involved in reincarnation, contributing to the inequality of status between types of men The subject is not one that directly concerns spirituality in the best sense of the word But inequality in this world as an expression of injustice touches on sociology and ethics, and can drastically influence politics, as it has done in India in the name of caste, which is a major problem that can hardly be by-passed by an author such as Vyasa, whose figure may be said to stand at the very core of Indian spirituality, representing the supreme role of dialectical revaluation, of a superior way of life, individual or collective

In the theorization implied here, Vyasa is not unlike Plotinus in his graphic description of how the soul enters matter Bergson's theories of matter and spirit follow the same lines Even in the Gita the allusion to birth in good or evil wombs has to be read side by side with xv, 8, and xvi, 19 There is a slight contradiction to be observed when the implication of this verse is read with the implication of verse 31 of this Chapter, where it is said that the Self is not affected though seated in the body, and though touching the body it is not tainted by the body

The same idea is contained in v, 10, that it is possible to keep the soul from being tainted like the lotus leaf unaffected by water The way in which the spirit can taste or enjoy qualities belonging to nature or matter is thus a paradox, better left unexplained However, when we remember that the *purusha* (spirit) here, as even Sankara admits in his comment on verse 20, could be a *samsari* (a mundane enjoyer) and in the light of the pragmatic necessity here to explain types of men, as we have pointed out, the contact between matter and mind implied in this verse becomes understandable, though a certain mystery is still attached to it Perhaps the author intends it to be a mystery, as *samsara* (cyclic repetition of existences) is a mystery, or as in osmosis in plants, the spirit absorbs what is good for itself to enjoy, leaving the dross in the soil

All we need admit for the purposes of the theory here is something like the law of opposites attracting each other as in a magnet, the idea of *purusha* (spirit) here being reduced to the status of one of the ambivalent factors Unlike the status of the

kshetrajna (knower of the field) which corresponds to *Isvara* (God) according to Sankara, and could be absorbed into wisdom, the *purusha* (spirit) could be called a *samsari* (a mundane enjoyer) still on the relativist side of life

The reference to *sad asad yonih* (good and bad wombs) calls for some comment In XVII, 26, it is explained that the word *sat* (true, existent) implies goodness and existence equally The good and bad wombs must, therefore, refer to degrees of perfection or goodness that an individual ego or self can attain, irrespective of the relative levels within which the differences of degree lie

In speaking of the *yogabhrasto* (the person fallen from yoga) in VI, 41—42, another aspect of the same theory was alluded to There it was stated that a person who had deflected from the path of yoga would be born in the family of pure and intelligent people The reference to *papayonah* (wombs of sin) in IX, 32 gives us another indication as to what might be in the mind of the author when he refers to bad wombs Between these two limits of a clean and intelligent family and persons steeped in necessity like proletarians (*sudras*), and others, we have to form a notion of degrees of difference within whose range a particular soul can have a choice Sankara suggests that good wombs are those of *devas* (divinities) and bad wombs those of lower animals, which would imply a still wider range with a choice possible outside the human context altogether

Keeping within the limits of what the Gita itself hints at in the passages cited above, we can safely conjecture that it is the gradations of the four *varnas* (colours, aptitude divisions) on the one hand and the kind of birth that a yogi can get on the other hand that is in the mind of the author The difference must be based on some sort of equilibrium between opposing tendencies of attraction and repulsion in the field of values An intellectually lazy or inert spirit gets involved deeper in a world of necessity like an elephant in a bog, to borrow an example from the *Yoga Vasishtha*

An intellectually alert individual will naturally escape the clutches of necessity and emerge out of the relativist world—*to some degree at least* An *intermediate group might include* men who by their alertness or activity, can float half emersed as it were *Prakriti* (nature) and *purusha* (spirit) are two opposing tendencies or forces and the individual life expression is a kind of stable equilibrium arrived at by the simultaneous action upon it of these opposing forces In verse 26 we find this

principle stated in very generalized terms, but we find that instead of nature and spirit, *kshetra* (field) and *kshetrajna* (knower of the field) are there substituted There is no harm in this, because the knower of the field here is not necessarily meant to have a superior status corresponding to absolute wisdom A degree of dualism is admitted here for the sake of explaining inequality as observed in this world We shall have further occasion to enter into the implication of this in greater detail from XVIII, 41 onwards

[22] *upadrashta 'numanta cha*
bharta bhokta mahesvarah
paramatme ti cha py ukto
dehe smin purusha parah

Supervisor, and Permitter Supporter, Experiencer, the Great Lord and also called the supreme Self (is) the supreme Spirit in the body

The mystery implied in the mode of contact between nature and spirit which was left vague in the previous verse is sought to be further clarified here Within the limits of the body, the Absolute in its purest implications suffers from certain conditionings and limitations The favourite example in Indian philosophy of a colourless, transparent crystal placed on red silk, the latter technically named *upadhi* (the conditioning factor) explains the contact to some extent In chemistry we have the example of catalytic agents which themselves suffer no change while being necessary for effecting changes in other chemicals with which they are in contact If these two examples still do not explain the mystery sufficiently, especially in a contemplative context we find mentioned here some other functions or qualities of the supreme Self within the body limits as its modified patterns of behaviour or types of personality

The word *upadrashta* (supervisor) suggests the role of an overseer of works He does not work himself but his immediate presence as a man on the spot is necessary for the work to go on Sankara suggests the head priest in a Vedic ritual under whose supervision the various ritual acts proceed in a certain order

Anumanta (permitter) can be thought of as a selective and eliminative principle Certain acts are approved and certain

others disapproved depending upon an innate principle derived from the Absolute.

The word *bhartā* (supporter, one who bears the weight) can in the first place be thought of, not necessarily as supporting from below, but from above as from a hanging lamp. The gross and active aspects of the senses, mind, etc., which form an aggregate in themselves, depend for their intelligent conscious function, on the spirit which is in contact with them, though indirectly. They are like the reflection of a flame on a mirror below, which reflection looks as though the flame were burning downwards, while in reality it is burning upwards. The reflection depends upon and may be said to be supported by the actual flame which represents pure wisdom, although within the limits of the body there is no harm in calling the same wisdom the supporter.

The term *bhoktā* (experiencer) is similarly justified, although in a strict sense absolute wisdom cannot be called an enjoyer. Within the limits of the body it is permissible to refer to the spirit as enjoyer inasmuch as a dead body cannot enjoy anything at all, and whatever enjoyment or experiencing there is on the perceptual side, must belong in principle at least, to the Absolute.

The expression *mahesvarah* (great lord) is used in the same sense approximately as in XVIII, 61. While here he is within the limit of the body, there he is further localized in the heart of man. Within the body limits there is another name for the same derived from the Absolute principle, named in XV, 14, as *vaisvānarah* (universal principle of the vital man) spoken of more particularly in connection with the important vital principle of the digestive "fire". It is here called *mahesvarah* (great lord) because of its universality, though the sense is limited here to the human species.

The word *paramātmā* (supreme Self) cancels out any cosmological or theological coloration implied in the former epithet, referring it back to psychology.

[23] *ya evam vetti purusham*
prakritim cha gunaih saha
sarvathā vartamāno 'pi
na sa bhūyo 'bhijāyate

He who thus knows spirit and nature, together with the intrinsic modalities, though he may happen to be leading every kind of life, is not born again.

This verse contains a sweeping assertion To expect more knowledge about the difference concerning spirit and nature to produce the far reaching effect of annihilating all bondage of *karma* (action), as Sankara insists on holding may be considered rather too easy a generalization But in the light of IV, 37, and the *Mundaka Upanishad* II, II, 8, the statement is quite in keeping with the Gita teaching Even if we have to take it in a realistic sense, we have the verses IV, 36, and IX, 30 and 31, with which the statement here tallies

The secret of the pure Absolute may be that of a rare philosopher only, but even a common man, who is able by his intuition to appreciate the subtle differential principle given to dialectical reasoning rather than to wisdom as such, can be said to hold the secret of that rare and neutral value which the Gita teaching throughout keeps in view This latter is not given to *buddhi* (reason) particularly alone, but to one who has a dialectical intuition and as such is called a yogi This point is brought out in the Gita in VI, 46

The expression *sarvatha vartamana 'pi* (though he may happen to be leading every kind of life) in effect states that no orthodox mode of life is recognized in the Gita A man can be a profligate, a gambler or publican but if he is wise he will be saved To think that a mode of life in keeping with Vedic orthodoxy alone will lead to the goal implied in the Gita is wholly discredited by this verse

[24] *dhyanena tmani pasyanti*
kechid atmanam atmana
anye samkhyena yogena
karmayogena cha pare

By meditation some behold the Self in the Self by the Self others by Samkhya Yoga (unitive reasoning) and others by *karma yoga* (action unitively understood)

Three kinds of Self realization are referred to here From Chapters II on Samkhya (rationalist) philosophy and III on *karma* (action) we had sufficient explanation of what Samkhya-Yoga (unitive reasoning) and *karma yoga* (action unitively understood) were intended to mean, as here These compound terms ought not to be confused with mere Samkhya (rationalism) or mere *karma* (action)

Yoga implies a certain method of equalization or cancellation of counterparts which we have tried to explain It is as when two factors are cancelled one against the other, that we come to something which is unitive Whether in the world of values that might belong to the field of necessary action or of rational life, or of Self-realization, the unitive value which results from the cancellation of counterparts is the same Thus it is stated here that some attain to the supreme value of the Absolute Self by cancelling the subjective aspect of the Self against the objective aspect of the same In other words, as in verse 17, there is an all-inclusive wisdom representing both these aspects

To cite one verse from the Sāmkhya (rationalist) philosophical context which implies the equalizing principle, we refer back to II, 48 and for the *karma* (action) context there is the famous verse IV, 18.

Sankara again resorts to his favourite argument of indirect or figurative meaning in regard to conceding to *karma* (action) the status of a yoga leading to Self-realization His polemics have always been directed against ritualism, but understood in the light of yoga as explained above, and in terms of a value, independent of any philosophical superiority, this slur on realization through *karma* (action) is unnecessary, though justified to the extent that *karma* (action) is very inferior to *buddhiyoga* (unitive understanding through reason) as admitted in the Gita in II, 49

[25] *anye tv evam ajānantah*
srutva 'nyebhaya upāsate
te 'pi cha 'titaranty eva
mrityum srutiparāyanah

But others, not knowing as stated (above) worship, having heard from others, they also cross beyond death, depending on hearsay

This verse covers all and sundry aspirants innocent of the secret of yoga Yoga being a counterpart of Samkhya (rationalist) philosophy implies some philosophical understanding of *tattvas* (principles) There is a large amorphous body of people outside the world of yogis, who instinctively have a notion of the Absolute by hearsay or other indirect means Although they may not attain to wisdom, they can also get the freedom

of a non relative kind by their appreciation of other-worldly values that lie beyond death, values that belong simultaneously to the here and the hereafter This verse also tends to abolish any orthodoxy or patent rights in regard to the secret teaching of the Gita

[26] *yāvat samjāyate kimchit*
sattvam sthavara jangamam
kshetra kshetrajna samyogat
tad viddhi bharatarshabha

Whatever is produced, the unmoving or the moving, know you, O Best of the Bhāratas (Arjuna), that to be from the union of the field and the knower of the field

We find here a return to the terms field and knower of the field, with which this Chapter started The discussion followed unitive philosophical lines, but confronted problems of empirical and pragmatic import, preferring the employment of the terms nature and spirit, which are now made to correspond to the original expressions, field and knower of the field, after a due explanation of the yogic methodology implied in verses 23 and 24

Sankara sees in this union of field and knower of the field the basis of *mithyajnana* (false, mistaken knowledge) True knowledge according to him would be one sided, favouring the *kshetrajna* (knower of the field) The field and the knower of the field together, according to him lead to the *adhyasa* (mistaken attribution) of one in the other Sankara's preference for wisdom values to ordinary values is quite legitimate, but need not make the truth of the statement in this verse invalid As we have already pointed out under verse 24, yogic understanding is different from mere logical understanding Sankara, being still a logician *par excellence*, refuses to see the value factor implied in the union of the field with the knower of the field, even while both are given the same eternal status The next verse throws further light on how, as values, all beings have the same status Chapter v 18 has stated the same equality If all beings are the same, such equality cannot depend on the actuality represented by each object We see them and deal with them differently, but the *value principle* in each is the same It is of the nature of a *resultant equilibrium* between the opposite factors that is the

point here in this Chapter It is the differential principle between the two counterparts which is at the basis of the *value* called the Absolute, present in each object, the superior entity given to philosophical speculation and referred to in verse 12, representing the positive content of wisdom This can be spoken of as a high value of a positive kind, but there are innumerable other values in the world towards which, as a yogi or dialectician, the wise man is related, and each of which as representing an absolute value in itself, is the same to him

[27] *samam sarveshu bhuteshu*
tishthantam paramesvaram
vinasyatsv avinasyantam
yah pasyati sa pasyati

He who sees the supreme Lord abiding (in a state of) equality in all beings, within the perishing as the non-perishing, he sees

The word *samam* (equal), as used here, does not merely imply a horizontal distributive equality of the high principle of the Supreme in all entities, which includes animate and inanimate objects according to the previous verse According to what was suggested in respect of the two opposing factors, the field and the knower of the field, the word *samam* (equal) indicates an equilibrium between two opposing forces, one tending towards the spirit, the other towards nature

The entities here have the same status as values each within its own category As the non perishing in the perishing, it is the Absolute itself which gives a final and equal status to all entities Inequality of status in value is not conceivable when the value implied in all entities is understood to be that of the Absolute Each category of entities might have a normative value belonging to its own frame of reference, but over and above all such frames of reference there is the absolute value equally implied in all of them The subtlety herein justifies the expression ' he who sees he sees '

Sankara here reveals a Samkhya (rationalist) inclination to raise the status of the Absolute above all its living expressions into something transcendental corresponding to a *purusha* (spirit) The full implication of the word *samam* (equal) is missed by him, and the paradox implicit in the statement

non perishing in the perishing where opposites cancel each other into a neutrality resulting in a value that can be both at once immanent and transcendent is not clearly recognized by him This is because of his use of *reason* rather than dialectics in his arguments

[28] *samam pasyan hi sarvatra*
samavasthitam isvaram
na hinasty atmana tmanam
tato yati param gatim

For he who sees the Lord seated equally everywhere destroys not the Self by the Self and then he attains the supreme goal

The secret implied in verse 27 is further elaborated in this and the next verse The duality of nature and spirit is implicit in both verses but in verse 30 we return again to a more unitive vision which is elaborated so as to reveal its full glory in the last four verses In these last four verses the dual aspects which it became necessary to resort to for the sake of dialectical methodology are completely discarded

In this present verse the counterparts are the Lord on one side and the Self on the other These two are really inter changeable terms When the idea of an *Isvara* (Lord) fulfils the condition of abiding equally in all entities whether animate or inanimate in the sense elaborated in the two previous verses it must correspond to the Absolute itself Hence it is that we are justified in saying that the Self and the Absolute are interchangeable terms *Brahman* (the Absolute) is a synonym of the Self and of *ananda* (bliss or the supreme value)

When the Lord thus understood is equated with the Self there is no longer any opposition This principle by which the Self as the Lord can unitively merge in the not on of the Self as the soul or inner spirit without any implied confl ct between them is explained in vi 6

The expression *hinasti* (destroys) refers to tl e alternative contingency also mentioned in vi 6 which happens when the two Selfs here implic tly referred to for purposes of d scuss on are non unitively or non contemplatively treated contrary to the requ rements of a yogic way of life One who *can* treat them unitively easily reaches the highest goal

[29] *prakrityai 'va cha karmani*
kriyamanani sarvasah
yah pasyati tatha 'tmanam
akartaram sa pasyati

He who sees that all actions are done by nature alone, and likewise that the Self is actionless, he (truly) sees

The spirit of this verse is not fundamentally different from IV, 18 Necessary action is automatic or could be accomplished by letting the action develop naturally without the will of the person concerned interfering with its natural course Thus nature may be left to work out its tendencies, the person being only a neutral witness

The converse of the same proposition would consist of the perfect actionlessness of the perceptual side of the personality To think that this perceptual side is in any way involved in the actual accomplishment of acts through the agency of nature constitutes a typical case of *adhyasa* (false attribution) of agency in action to the spirit A great deal of worry can be avoided if the division between the actual and perceptual is clear in all its possible implications, whether in ordinary everyday life or in the spiritual life proper, so called Thus attaining to peace, such a person may be said to see the secret of the way of yoga recommended in the Gita

[30] *yada bhutaprithagbhavam*
ekastham anupasyati
tata eva cha vistaram
brahma sampadyate tada

When he perceives the disjunct existence of beings established in the one, and from whence also their expansion then he becomes the Absolute

By this reference to the subtle dialectical principle of the one and the many, as in Parmenides, a more comprehensive and unitive view of the Absolute is regained in the discussion here There is also here a reference to the centre and the periphery being unitively comprehended as in the case of the one and the many Becoming the Absolute instead of seeing, marks a further degree in the spiritual progress of the man

of wisdom. This is not out of tune with the teaching of the Upanishads and what is said elsewhere in the Gita as we have explained under verse 23

[31] *anaditvān nirgunatvat*
paramatma 'yam avyayah
sarirastho 'pi kaunteya
na karoti na lipyate

Having no beginning, have no attributes (*gunas*), this supreme Self, suffers no decrease though dwelling in the body, O Son of Kunti (Arjuna), it neither acts nor is it tainted

This begins the series of four verses in which the status of the Absolute is restored to its full untainted purity and glory so as to remove any stigma that might attach itself to the notion of the Absolute, which was subjected to a dualistic treatment earlier in the Chapter

The word *anāditvam* (beginninglessness) refers to the nature-aspect of the Absolute and *nirgunatvam* (attributelessness), the state of absence of triple modalities, refers to its spirit aspect Both put together and understood unitively gives us the neutral value which is actionless though seated within the living body These paradoxes have been already explained

[32] *yatha sarvagatam saukshmyad*
akasam no 'paliptyate
sarvatra 'vasthito dehe
tatha tmā no 'palipyate

As the all pervading subtle space principle (*akasa*) is untarnished by reason of its subtlety, so the Self, seated everywhere in the body, is untarnished

The specific functions which might be considered sacred or profane within the body are not so considered by the pure spirit seated uniformly spread throughout every part of the body The experience of the body that the spirit feels is non specific and wholesale in character In its globality and because of the subtle nature of such a general affective content the feeling is merely one of two poles interacting To use Sankara's analogy, fire can heat a pot The heat belongs to the pot, while

the fire is independent of the specific qualities belonging to the pot.

[33] *yathā prakāsayaty ekah*
kritsnam lokam imam ravih
kshetram kshetri tathā kritsnam
prakasayati bhārata

As the one sun illumines this whole world, so does the Lord of the field, O Bhārata (Arjuna) illumine all the field.

The illustration gains in universality and subtlety by one degree It is well known that the sun shines on good and bad places indifferently, just revealing its aloofness and supremacy as a glorious value. By shining on the field it can even be supposed that the field itself and its visible existence depends on the unitive sun, which would thus include without difference the *kshetra* (field) and the *kshetrajna* (knower of the field), fused into one supreme value.

The individual entities or units that might constitute the field, as in verse 3, are overlooked here because "the many" is treated as the dialectical counterpart of "the one", and taken collectively to be absorbed unitively in the value that the knower of the field represents analogously to the sun.

[34] *kshetra kshetrajnayor evam*
antaram jnanachakshushā
bhutaprakritimoksham cha
ye vidur yānti te param

Those who by the eye of wisdom perceive the difference between the field and the knower of the field (its bearing on) elements-nature-emancipation—they go to the Supreme

In this Chapter the most important subject to which the author wanted our attention to be directed was the distinction between *kshetra* (the field) and *kshetrajna* (the knower of the field) Summing up the discussion, the author almost takes the words out of the contents of verse 2, where it was stated that knowledge itself only amounted to understanding the distinction implied between these two factors. Standing

neutrally between them, linking them into unity, is the enigmatic hyphen (*antaram*) which is a great mystery, requiring the *jnanachakshushah* (eye of wisdom) to see

It is further indicated in this verse, by way of a concluding review, that we have covered incidentally the other allied questions concerning *first* the elements which we know formed the first of the items making up the field, and *secondly* how the discussion passed on to active good and bad modalities implied in nature, also in the domain of the field, and its dynamic aspect, and *finally* in the last section, there was reference to how a person who understands this subject of the Chapter properly would attain to the Absolute or reach the goal, etc, all of which pertain to the subject of *moksha* (emancipation) Thus the author wants to direct our attention to the incidental discussion of these subjects also, while focussing the attention mainly on the field and the knower of the field

In this last section on *moksha* (emancipation) and in the section on *jneyam* (what is to be known), the two factors, the field and the knower of the field, were treated unitively But when it was a question of facing problems in nature, they were treated as distinct counterparts for the purposes of discussion, without, however, damaging their essential unity

The compound word *bhuta prakriti moksha* (elements nature-emancipation) gives equal importance to the three sections, while referring to them summarily here Some translators treat the compound word not as *samahara dvandva* (collective-dual compound) but as *panchami tat purusha* (compound in which the members do not lose their independence) by which the word gains the meaning of ' liberation of beings from nature ' The object of this concluding verse being one of reviewing by way of a final resume of the subjects covered in this Chapter, we prefer to treat the compound as a form of *samahara dvandva*

ity srimad bhagavadgitasupanishatsu brahmavidyayam
yogasastre srikrishnarjunasamvade
kshetrakshetrajnavibhagayogo nama trayodaso dhyayah

Thus ends in the Upanishads of the Songs of God in the Science of the Wisdom of the Absolute in the Dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna the Thirteenth Chapter entitled Unitive Understanding of the Distinction between the Actual and the Perceptual

CHAPTER XIV

THE UNITIVE WAY OF TRANSCENDING THE THREE NATURE-MODALITIES

Gunatrayavibhaga Yoga

THE three *gunas* or nature modalities with which this Chapter is concerned belong to nature as expressed in the personality or the Self We have already seen in the previous Chapter that there are two eternal Selfs both having an equal status, and it was stated as a law that it was from the union between these two aspects that all creatures came to be (XIII, 26) It was further clarified in the last Chapter (XIII, 21) that attachment to the modalities in nature was the cause of birth in "good or bad wombs" The outline of the theory which is going to be discussed in the present Chapter was thus laid in the last Chapter What follows in this Chapter is a further clarification of this theory of modalities in nature, and it may be said to be one of the important contributions of the Gita

We noticed in the previous Chapter that the two aspects of the Self which were postulated there for purposes of discussion had an equal and eternal status In verse 32 it was further stated that the Self lodged in the body was not affected by the body Thus it was in the name of the higher Self that the discussion in the previous Chapter was carried on

In this Chapter the same discussion is continued in a rather lopsided fashion The perfect symmetry and equality of status of the *kshetra* (field) and the *kshetrajna* (knower of the field), representing the body and the spirit respectively, is seen to be somewhat violated by making the lower Self pertaining to the *kshetra* (field or body) the centre of the discussion This lower or bodily Self belongs to the domain of nature and necessity rather than to the free contingent spirit As such it is subject to the modalities of nature as implied in the theory here These modalities have, all of them, the effect of binding

or conditioning the Self The Self which is subject to natural bondages is not the higher Self but one that is merely a 'dweller in the body' or the 'body owner' which is subject to birth, death, old age and sorrows The three modalities refer only to this lower Self and, what is more, a man who conforms to the description given in verses 22 to 25 at the end of this Chapter transcends the three modalities and becomes released from their binding force, and gains full spiritual status The requirement laid down in verse 19 for crossing over the domain of the lower Self which is under the influence of the modalities to the higher, free and eternal Self is very simple He has only to see that there is no agent other than the modalities of nature which keep him bound Knowledge thus effects ready release How a simple knowledge of this kind could win such a precious release is further explained in the last section of this Chapter as consisting of a certain attitude of neutrality or balance between opposites The lower Self which is given primacy in this Chapter and even referred to as the 'basis of the Absolute' in verse 27 interacts with the higher or intelligent Self, and the overall wisdom about the two Selfs establishes an equilibrium between them This is the yoga or unitive discipline implied here The primacy given to the lower Self in this Chapter for purposes of discussion is quickly corrected, as we shall see in the next Chapter where both the Selfs are revalued in terms of a supreme Self called the *purushottama*

In evaluating the importance of this Chapter we have to remember that it is the domain of necessity or action which forms the subject here On final analysis necessity has an irreducible minimum implicit in it which is itself eternal and therefore has to be given due recognition in the context of the Absolute The Absolute which is merely conceived in terms of an idea has no power to release one from the bonds of nature It is simple neutrality between the dual aspects of the Absolute itself which helps in the release of the person seeking liberation through wisdom

Sribhagavan uvacha

[1] *param bhuyah pravakshyami*
jnananam jnanam uttamam
yaj jnatva munayah sarve
param siddhim ito gatah

In the Samkhya (rationalist) philosophy as we have already noticed, emanation and retraction are often referred to by the terms *sankara* (evolution) and *pratisankara* (devolution) which happen in contrary directions in the matrix of the *avyakta* (unmanifested root nature or matter)

[3] *mama yonir mahad brahma*
tasmin garbham dadhamy aham
sambhavah sarvabhutanam
tato bhavati bharata

My womb is great Brahma (supreme deity), in that I place the germ thence is the birth of all beings, O Bharata (Arjuna)

The Upanishads speak of a higher and a lower Absolute The *Isa Upanishad* (verse 15) has the words What is thy fairest form—that of thee I see He who is yonder, yonder Person—I myself am he! There are terms such as *hiranya garbha* (the golden germ or embryo) and *parabrahma* (supreme aspect of the Absolute), and *siva* (masculine principle of the Absolute) and *sakti* (feminine principle of the Absolute) whose interaction makes the phenomenal world come into view from the unmanifested matrix Thus in many ways the central idea of this verse is familiar in the context of Indian spirituality

Samkhya (rationalist) philosophy contains the same elements under the name of *prakriti* (nature) and *purusha* (spirit) but with an implicit duality which makes it slightly different from what is described in this present verse *Prakriti* (nature) in the Samkhya (rationalist) system is itself the cause of all created things but here the absolute principle common to both nature and spirit is spoken of as the fecundating factor producing all beings

That the Gita strongly disapproves of such a dualism is clear from xvi 8 In the present verse there is an implied androgynous image which is intended to express the non duality of nature and spirit

[4] *sarvayonishu kaunteya*
murtayah sambhavanti yah
tasam brahma mahad yonir
aham bijapradah pita

> Whatever tangible forms are produced in all the wombs, O Son of Kunti (Arjuna), great Brahma (supreme deity) is their (common) womb and I am the seed-bestowing Father.

There is a slight variant in the figure of speech here which is important to notice The multiplicity of wombs is here abolished in favour of one common to all, and the multiplicity of beings do not seem to require separate wombs for their birth

The converse of the same, which is that all the varieties of beings belong to one great womb, which is that of the Absolute, is perhaps more suitable for the discussion which is to follow which has the problem of distinguishing Peter from Paul, rather than seeing the principle uniting them In spite of such a need, we find here the one and the many wombs, the father and mother aspects of the Absolute in nature, all tend to come near to one another in the treatment of the subject in these two verses, 3 and 4

[5] *sattvam rajas tama iti*
gunah prakritisambhavah
nibadhnanti mahabaho
dehe dehinam avyayam

> The pure-clear (*sattva*), the affective active (*rajas*), and the inert dark (*tamas*), these nature necessity-born modalities (*gunas*) bind, O Mighty armed (Arjuna), the imperishable embodied one

The much misunderstood theory of the three *gunas* (modalities in nature) is given a whole Chapter here and applications of the theory in the various departments of moral, social, religious and philosophical life constitute the greater part of the remainder of the Gita In the popular mind these three modalities have been closely associated with the question of the four *varnas* (colours divisions of society) and this has vitiated popular thought in India through centuries The disastrous consequences of this association have been evident to every modern mind In the Gita however these three modalities are applied not only to the subject of psychological types and problems of vocational guidance, but to schools of philosophic thought and to contemplative disciplines and attitudes in general Even diet is not omitted

Krishna said:
I shall again declare that superior wisdom, the best of all wisdom, by knowing which all sage-recluses (*munis*) have passed to transcendental perfection from here.

The word *guhyam* (secret) is not found in the discussion of the kind of *jnānam* (wisdom) specifically referred to in the opening line of this Chapter. On the other hand, the superior character and the special quality of the aspect of wisdom that is meant to be dealt with here, is asserted with striking prominence.

After the thirteen Chapters have been covered, how such an important aspect of wisdom has been so far neglected, can only be explained by the fact that we are here entering into the domain of what was referred to as *vijnāna* (specific or specialized aspect of wisdom) in IX, 1. This specific quality of wisdom has now attained a maturity in the last four Chapters, so that the author is now able in this Chapter to confront the modalities of natural expression in the actual world of human values, which are not necessarily spiritual in the best or usual sense of the term, but yet deserve attention as belonging to the principle of a necessity which is also eternal.

The reference to *munis* (sage recluses, silent ones) is to a type of spirituality whose pattern of behaviour is visibly different from others who belong more closely to social life. The *muni* is still a contemplative who gives importance to a certain kind of behaviour over and above the theoretical wisdom which he might have as a seer.

The *siddhi* (attainment) refers to perfection belonging to this sage-recluse pattern.

The word *itah* (from here) indicates that the subject is approached from *this side*, i.e., the necessary side of the here and now, from which these sages may be said to have ascended to the transcendental values implied in wisdom.

[2] *idam jnānam upāsritya*
mama sādharmyam āgatāh
sarge 'pi no' pajāyante
pralaye na vyathanti cha

Having resorted to this wisdom, and having attained to conformity in (express) features pertaining to Me, they are neither born at creation nor are they adversely affected at dissolution.

Sarga (emanation) and *pralaya* (reabsorption or melting back) refer to two phenomenal aspects of life that we experience from this side, i e. taking the world to be real and not treating it as an illusion. It is a world of time and the interval between these two opposing events here is often alluded to in the Indian legends as consisting of many millions of years

The sage in question here, when he has passed on to the transcendental wisdom, is no longer affected by these phenomenal aspects of the universe, because as this verse itself states, whatever personal expression the sage might have in any relativist context has attained conformity to the function, if any, of the Absolute itself. Whether, as Sankara says, the sage by this kind of conformity, has attained perfect union with the Absolute, is neither raised nor answered in the Gita This is evidently because such a question is not necessary for the purposes of this Chapter If Sankara in his comments respected more closely the intention of the author in each Chapter he would have conceded that it was not quite necessary for Vyāsa at this stage of the discussion to say whether or not perfection was implied by the conformity with the Absolute that is here referred to That he did attain perfection goes without saying from the mere fact that he is already a *muni* (sage recluse) and that he is learning only the most superior aspects of wisdom remaining to be taught after thirteen previous Chapters now.

Further, this verse only extols the type of sage meant here, promising him the highest possible limits of perfection open to him to obtain, without specifically putting any limit to his perfection if any remaining *beyond the context of this Chapter.* Such a question is rightly left open, although in the last verse of this Chapter some indications of the perfection that lies beyond the point covered in this Chapter are also indicated. Never decreasing immortality, eternal way of conduct and the lonely path of ultimate happiness are items yet to be covered by him.

The term *sādharmya* (conformity in express features) may therefore be taken to mean simply that the sage, by conforming to a way of life belonging to the lower or necessary aspect of the Absolute, gets an initial status in the transcendental higher aspect of the Absolute which liberates him from the bondage of phenomenal cosmological events within time, such as emanation and dissolution That two such stages of perfection are to be distinctly thought of is implied in the Gita from verses VI, 3, and XV, 11

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mama sādharmyam āgatah
sarge 'pi no' pajāyante
pralaye na vyathanti cha

Having resorted to this wisdom, and having attained to conformity in (express) features pertaining to Me, they are neither born at creation nor are they adversely affected at dissolution

To reduce this theory to a fetish and cling to it too easily as a rule of thumb whenever racial, religious or caste superiority or inferiority is to be discussed has been a bane which has given rise to many forms of injustice and inequality in social, economic and even educational fields, stifling and submerging or suffocating large groups of people in respect of their natural freedom and self-expression Men like Mahatma Gandhi have fallen under the false spell of such a misinterpreted and misunderstood theory

Therefore, in entering into the subject of the three nature-modalities we should be quite aware of its full implications and should avoid treating it as the popular mind has done in too easy a fashion To treat it as supporting a particular theory of caste instead of taking it as generally meant to explain subtle deep seated problems of necessary human life has been the great error since the time of Manu

In the first place the three nature modalities do not suggest any differentiation within the human species itself, giving rise to any sub species or race, as many might suppose by the constant use of the word *jati* (kind, species) in connection with *varna* often taken as the same as ' caste questions The modalities in nature implied in the *gunas* are not such as to make it possible for anyone to separate people physiologically or even scientifically into any watertight groups Even hereditary tribal or clan groupings are not envisaged by the theory as presented in the Gita

When we include deeper traits of the personality, to arrive at any such classification we see in common life that the modalities mentioned here alternate and change over in the same person during the course of his growth or development as an individual and even from moment to moment in his daily behaviour Moreover, if we take the case of Arjuna s own kshattriahood (warrior status) we find it true and valid only when the occasion of a righteous or absolutist war is present Killing would be right for Arjuna at best for a few hours

Inertia motion and stability are suggested by the three modalities and may be said to be at the basis of *tamas* (inert dark) *rajas* (affective active) and *sattva* (pure clear) respectively They could also be said to express themselves in dullness, alertness and steady intelligence or as sloth, excitement and contemplative capacity We could similarly speak of three gradations based on harmony or on unitive philosophical insight or again in terms of affectivity In fact this is what the

Gita has attempted in Chapter XVIII, after explaining and defining as completely as possible the origin of these modalities of nature and their field of operation, which is limited to the lower Self

This theory as applied here contributes one of the grandest positive contributions of Vyasa to philosophy He has stated here the rationale of many departments of spiritual life, especially in India, which otherwise would have remained shrouded in a mysterious confusion favourable to every kind of superstition in the name of a common belief By the help of this theory, Vyasa has succeeded in grading and arranging spiritual life

The three *gunas* (nature modalities) should be viewed dynamically and not statically, as a triple stranded regulative necessary principle which interferes with the flux of becoming and above all as something that still pertains to the relative side of life only, without having anything to do with spirituality properly understood They are normative and not experimentally fixed in character Above all they have to be under stood only in conjunction with the objective counterparts belonging to each, without which they are absurd in them selves

Such is the only sense of II, 45 where Arjuna is asked to transcend the three nature modalities and not to cultivate them We can also see in this Chapter in verse 25 the recom mending reference to *gunatitah* (one who has transcended the three modalities of nature)

We have already drawn attention to the fact that the Self is bound to necessity as implied in the word *nibadhnanti* (bind) Anything tending to bind the Self however even if the bondage is with a golden thread cannot be called truly spiritual, because all spirituality implies release or freedom

Even a person conforming to the highest or the purest modality of the three, the *sattva guna* can lay claim at best only to an exalted form of holiness and not to true spirituality which is quite another thing The first qualification of a spiritual person is *anahamkara* (ego lessness) which is an attribute belonging properly to the *kshetrajna* (the perceptual side of life, the knower of the field) [see XIII 7] while simple egoism belongs to the opposite counterpart the *kshetra* (the actual, relative the field) [as stated in XIII 5]

A person conscious of his own holiness to the slightest degree is tainted by *ahamkara* (egoism) revealing his self sense as

belonging to the actual rather than to the perceptual. This field to which the three *gunas* (nature-modalities) belong should therefore be understood to be relativistic in character, and so all the modalities, including the *sattva* (pure-clear) have the tendency of binding rather than releasing. A *sāttvic* brahmin would automatically degenerate to the status of an untouchable even if the most superior of the egoisms arising from the *gunas* (modalities) should taint him.

[6] *tatra sattvam nirmalatvāt*
prakasakam anamayam
sukhasangena badhnāti
jnānasangena chā 'nagha

Of these, the pure-clear modality (*sattva*) from its purity, causing brightness and expressing normal well-being, binds by pleasure-conditioning and by knowledge-conditioning, O Sinless-One (Arjuna).

Stating in more precise terms what *sattva* (pure-clear modality) means is the object of this verse The expression *sukhasangena badhnati* (binds by pleasure-conditioning) implies an element of a paradox, inasmuch as what is truly pleasurable need not be considered binding The conditioning factor of happiness here is not therefore to be identified with unconditioned happiness which can only be the attribute of the Absolute Self The status of the happiness here is compromised and left as vague as the notion of the Absolute itself is bound to be

The word *anāmayam* (normal well-being) suggests that the spirit conditioned by *sattva* (pure-clear modality) has not been disturbed from the equilibrium that is normal to nature A plant which is heliotropic seeks light normally and is naturally erect when undisturbed The clarity and the purity implied in *sattva* (pure-clear modality) are therefore normal or natural qualities of the psyche when it submits neutrally to nature's laws There is goodness in nature itself, as Rousseau would put it Bliss and *jnāna* (knowledge) point in the same general direction of light.

[7] *rajo rāgatmakam viddhi*
trishnasanga samudbhavam
tan nibadhnati kaunteya
karmasangena dehinam

Know you the affective-active modality (*rajas*) as being of the nature of attachment, conditioned by thirst for life and the adhering tendency, it binds fast, O Son of Kunti (Arjuna), the embodied one, by action-association.

The conditioning factors in regard to *rajas* (affective active modality) are of a non-specific nature belonging to life in general, more subjective than objective There is a vital urge which is the prompting force behind all activity characteristic of what is firstly implied in this modality of nature called *rajas* (affective-active).

As the word *rajas* implies, the principal character of this modality is *raga* (attachment to various objective values in life). The two inner conditioning items of life's urge are here named *trishna* (thirst for life, or will to live in general) and *āsanga* (adhering tendency) There is a general thirst for life and also a tendency for life to reach towards and get attracted to pleasurable values of ordinary life

[8] *tamas tv ajnanajam viddhi*
mohanam sarvadehinām
pramādalasya nidrabhis
tan nibadhnati bharata

But the inert dark modality (*tamas*) know you, is born of ignorance, deluding all embodied beings, it binds, O Bharata (Arjuna), by delusion, lassitude and somnolence

The reference in the phrase *sarvadehinām* (all embodied beings) indicates that no specific virtue is implied in *tamas* (inert-dark) which forms, as it were, the inert basis of material life itself Animals and men can be equally included as representing this modality in nature Even a *sattvic* brahmin if he does not make an effort against natural inertia will still be bound by it This is implied in the word *dvija* (twice-born) applied to him

A cow scared by a red rag is negatively conditioned by a false cognition owing to a lack of wakeful intelligence Men suffer from hallucinations and their spirits sink into negative states The imagination becomes active at the expense of intelligence The subnormal hypnotic or sleeping state is

common to such beings A basic inertia which is stable and common to all beings is implied in this modality which comes closest to earthiness or to inert matter. In this latter quality literary figures like Caliban and Falstaff or a Bhīma or Kumbhakarna are representative types

[9] *sattvam sukhe sanjayati*
rajah karmani bhārata
jnānam āvrtya tu tamah
pramade sanjayaty uta

The pure-clear modality (*sattva*) conduces to pleasure, and the affective-active modality (*rajas*) to action, O Bhārata (Arjuna), while the inert dark modality (*tamas*), shrouding wisdom, conduces to delusion

Each modality is referred to here more briefly from the side of its expression rather than from its source, for diagnostic purposes The confusion or delusion caused by the modality called *tamas* is here further explained Mistaking one value for another, or getting confused generally through appearances and not being guided by realities which correct knowledge alone can bring—such is the expression by which this modality is to be recognized

The word *avrtya* (shrouding, veiling) suggests what is elsewhere known in Vedānta as *āvarana sakti* (veiling power) which is to be distinguished from *vikshepa sakti* (projective attributing power), both described by Sankara *Pramada* (delusion, madness)—not heedlessness as often translated—may be taken to include hallucinations, because when wisdom is shrouded appearances become deceptive

[10] *rajas tamas chā 'bhibhuya*
sattvam bhavati bhārata
rajah sattvam tamas chai 'va
tamah sattvam rajas tathā

Now the pure clear modality (*sattva*) dominates, overpowering the affective active (*rajas*) and the inert-dark (*tamas*), and the affective-active (*rajas*) over the pure clear (*sattva*) and the inert dark (*tamas*), likewise the inert-dark (*tamas*) over the pure-clear (*sattva*) and the affective active (*rajas*), O Bharata (Arjuna)

How the modalities come into play one at a time, the one eclipsing or dominating over the other two, which lie dormant or recessive for the time being, and how necessity conditions nature and limits its scope with one or other of these three factors is described in this verse

It is not easy to visualize such a process as taking place in very concrete or visible terms In modern biology and psychology we have terms like synergism, and ambivalence We have also in theology the two antinomial principles, and there are terms like dichotomy used by certain philosophers In electricity and magnetism we have positive and negative charges which have become more and more perfected when understood in atomic physics under the name of proton and neutron We do not propose to enter into a comparative study of the theory of the modalities of nature as presented here, as this would presuppose a common frame of reference which would be difficult to supply We shall therefore adhere closely to the text and content ourselves with the author's own version for the present

When he states that *rajas* and *sattva* recede when *tamas* dominates, we have to infer that there is an organic interdependence between them This is suggestive of the principle of ambivalence Psychologists know how strong emotions can counteract intelligence and *vice versa* Emotivity and intelligence are therefore two modalities corresponding to *tamas* and *sattva* which we can easily concede to be reciprocal and ambivalent

Taking the case of *rajas*, it puts into the background the capacity for both intelligence and delusion The here and now of a situation occupies the whole of the stream of consciousness, as when in India village cattle run after moving motor cars The field of consciousness contains nothing other than the given situation in which the subject is related to the object For a hunter who chases a rabbit, only himself and the rabbit enter into the situation Thus hunting becomes a passion Such are the broad outlines of what is implied in this verse

How such a succeeding rotation of modalities operate in the spirit of man, and how the spirit itself which belongs to the side of actuality could establish another kind of bipolar relationship with one of the two *purushas* (spirits) discussed in the next Chapter, are matters of philosophical speculation of a very subtle kind This is stated in so many words by the author in xv, 10 and 11 One has to be both a yogi and a wise man

together to be able to clearly visualize the determinative and indeterminative factors which enter into the situation

All we want to emphasize here is that there are two sets of polarities to be distinguished, one within the limits of the *kshetra* (field or actuality) as in this Chapter, and the other in the larger context of the *purushottama* (the supreme spirit) which term itself comprises two distinct *purushas* (spirits). We must bear in mind these broad distinctions, so as not to confound values belonging to the limited polarity here with those more general and truly spiritual values discussed in the next Chapter

These modalities should not be treated too concretely. They have to be taken in a manner which would enable us to fit our understanding of them in the larger context of a science of the Absolute to which they belong Even when apparently concrete problems are confronted in the light of the theory presented here, particularly in Chapter XVIII, we should remember to take the subject as belonging to the science of the Absolute This will be greatly facilitated if we keep in mind that it is various contemplative values as they pertain to each department of life which is the subject of the Gita throughout, rather than any static notion of reality

[11] *sarvadvareshu dehe 'smin*
prakāsa upajayate
jnanam yada tadā vidyād
vivriddham sattvam ity uta

When light which is wisdom streams forth from all the doors of the body, then it may be understood that the pure-clear modality (*sattva*) is predominant

The gates of the body referred to here are the *indriyas* (sense organs) which put the body in living touch with their corresponding objects of perception Consciousness consists of both subject and object and, as consciousness is comparable to light, here it is stated that when the healthy spirit belonging to nature and pertaining to necessity, expresses itself normally there is a fullness of consciousness in relation to the various senses which may be said to be doors or windows of the soul

The reference to the streaming of light should not be taken too literally, but in the sense indicated above. It only means that life is in good condition A healthy cat rolling in sunlight

in the snow may be said to enjoy something akin to a yogic state of its own kind

In the properly human context *sattvik* (pure clear) well-being, though it applies to the bodily side, can reflect on the mind and be conducive to brilliancy of intelligence either in the matter of learning or philosophical insight or in terms of yogic clarity of vision comparable to the *turiya* (mystical fourth' state beyond waking, dreaming and sleeping) which is neither inside nor outside the body limits

[12] *lobhah pravrittir arambhah*
karmanam asamah spriha
rajasy etani jayante
vivriddhe bharatarshabha

When the affective active modality (*rajas*) dominates, there arises greed, activity, initiation of works, impatience, and covetousness, O Best of Bharatas (Arjuna)

From the enumeration of the symptoms of a man in whom *rajas* (affective active modality) is dominant, we find qualities that involve a relation with an outside object or value The interest here may be said to be horizontally directed towards things in the world, such as goods or possessions A *kshattriya* (warrior) who is said to typify these characteristics, as port rayed in XVIII 43, reveals a striking difference compared to the usual type of warrior The revaluation in the Gita must be kept in mind so that he may not be taken merely as a representative of *rajasik* (affective-active) qualities but rather as one who has *sublimated* such qualities through contemplative disciplines recommended in the Gita A brahmin is similarly promoted almost to the grade of a *samnyasin* (renouncer) in XVIII, 42, and as against such a promotion the status of a *sudra* (proletarian) as representing *tamas* (inert-dark modality) makes him a mere worker or servant caught in necessity slavishly without freedom at all These are departures from the con ventional pattern of the four castes mentioned by Manu They represent a revalued pattern special to the Gita which treats of the castes not in a social or political setting but as proper to a textbook on contemplation

The picture in this verse is too inferior in value to conform to the pattern of a true *kshattriya* (warrior) of the Gita. At

present the description of *rajas* is only meant for diagnostic purposes, but the *rajas* implicit in the attitude of a correct *kshattriya* (warrior) will be revised and revalued in Chapter XVIII

[13] *aprakāso 'pravrittis cha*
pramado moha eva cha
tamasy etani jayante
vivriddhe kurunandana

When the inert dark modality (*tamas*) dominates, dullness, lack of initiative, delusion, infatuation arise, O Joy of the Kurus (Arjuna)

Even here we can see that the diagnostic qualities of a *tāmasik* (inert dark) person do not conform even to the minimal requirements of a good servant, who cannot be at least without some initiative in his work How women and *vaishyas* (merchant farmers) can also fit into the threefold scheme of the *gunas* (modalities of nature) raises other problems, tending to make the theory vaguer in its application to the four castes understood contemplatively We shall, however, have a chance of discussing these aspects more fully in Chapter XVIII where the theory is more completely applied to objective cases

[14] *yadā sattve pravriddhe tu*
pralayam yati dehabhrit
tado 'ttamavidam lokām
amalan pratipadyate

[15] *rajasi pralayam gatvā*
karmasangishu jayate
tathā pralinas tamasi
mudhayonishu jayate

If the body-bearer goes to dissolution when the pure-clear modality (*sattva*) predominates, then it attains to the pure worlds of those who understand the best (values)

Meeting with dissolution when the affective active modality (*rajas*) dominates, he is born among those attached to action, and likewise if dissolved in (a

state of) inert dark modality (*tamas*) he is born in the wombs of the foolish

Both these verses have the same line of reasoning found in VIII 10 in referring to death and after death states to be attained Just as a tree is judged by its fruit so the three modalities and their values are to be determined by their corresponding counterparts death itself being the equating principle between them

In the case of the *rajasik* (affective-active) and the *tamasik* (inert dark) men the worlds in which they are to be born seem to be the earth that we are familiar with but in the case of the man in whom *sattva* (pure clear) predominates it is not clear whether the superior values attained in the pure worlds belong to the immanent or the transcendent order Those worlds whatever they are cannot be different from that attained by the *yogabrashta* (one fallen from yoga) of VI 41 It is not necessary to think here that this statement implies any possibility of being born in hereditary watertight caste groups as we see them actually in any country who might follow what they claim to be a *sattvik* (pure clear) or brahmin tradition Such visible social groupings may or may not have much in common with the pure worlds of verse 14 or of the intelligent environment suggested in VI 41

Note that in the case of the *tamasik* (inert dark) death state it is not any transcendental world of values but the physical environment itself that constitutes the counterpart or result

[16] *karmanah sukritasya huh*
sattvikam nirmalam phala n
rajasas tu phalam duhkham
ajnanam tamasah phalam

The benefit of good action is said to be pure-clear (*sattvik*) and pure while the benefit of the affective active modality (*rajas*) is pain and ignorance the benefit of the inert dark modality (*tamas*)

The same truth of verses 14 and 15 is restated with the counterparts brought closer together as action and its corresponding benefit Here the modalities refer to *karma* (action) and not to global personal attitudes at the time of death Action is a positive express on of life rather than an attitude and has

its corresponding result here or hereafter Instead of going from effect to cause here we trace the effect from the cause This shows that the equation of the counterparts involved could be both ways

[17] *sattvat samjayate jnanam*
rajaso lobha eva cha
pramadamohau tamaso
bhavto jnanam eva cha

From the pure clear modality (*sattva*) arises wisdom, as also from the affective active modality (*rajas*) greed and both delusion and infatuation and also ignorance from the inert dark modality (*tamas*)

The same operation of equating the three modalities with their counterparts is carried out here as a slight variant to the others Cause and effect are treated more unitively

[18] *urdhvam gachchhanti sattvastha*
madhye tishthanti rajasah
jaghanyaguna vrittistha
adho gachchhanti tamasah

Those who abide in the pure clear modality (*sattva*) go upwards the affective active (*rajasik*) dwell in the middle and the inert dark (*tamasik*) abiding in the function of the lowest modality of nature go down wards

This verse restates the same verity in terms of high and low values The ambivalence represented by the three modalities of nature which were somewhat veiled by being judged in the light of their diagnostic marks or expressions now emerges in its proper symmetry of opposition

There are ordinary middle state values from which we could have arrows representing a series of *sattvik* (pure clear) values that may be said to ascend a scale upwards and correspondingly there is a downward scale reaching to the lowest values known to man here referred to by the expression *jaghanya gunavrittistha* (abiding in the function of the very lowest modality of nature) It goes without saying that the middle values belong to the *rajasik* (affective active) modality

[19] *na 'nyam gunebhyah kartaram*
yada drashta nupasyati
gunebhyas cha param vetti
madbhavam so dhigachchhati

When the seer beholds no other agent than the modalities of nature, and knows that which lies beyond the modalities, he attains to My state of being

The rest of the Chapter makes amends for the one sided digression that the discussion of the three modalities involved The two verses that follow round off the subject by referring again to both the immanent and transcendent aspects of the Absolute

The three modalities discussed hitherto cover all values that may be said to come within the range of the body These have to be taken together with those higher values belonging to the transcendental aspect of the Absolute referred to here as *gunebhyah param* (lying beyond the modalities) These two aspects have to be treated unitively as always understood in the context of yoga, so that perfection may be attained

[20] *gunan etan atitya trin*
dehi deha samudbhavan
janma mrityu jara duhkhair
vimukto mritam asnute

The embodied, having transcended these three modalities of nature originating in the body, is freed from sufferings of birth death and old age and enjoys immortality

This verse underlines again, in non philosophical and popular language, lest the reader should forget that the modalities of nature are all *deha samudbhavah* (originating in the body) In transcending them one attains to freedom from the ills of the body and thus to immortality

The status given in the *Maitri Upanishad* (III) to the modalities of nature resembles that in the Gita which is revised in the light of wisdom and unlike the picture in the *Manusmriti* XII, 24 40, in *Yajnavalkhya Dharma Sutras* II 137 139 and the *Maha Bharata* XII, 194 29-36 219 25 31 Social necessity is the mould in conformity with which the subtle modalities

depending upon the *tan-mātras* (conceptual aspects of the senses) may be said to flow in, making all the different types that appear "in the world of men" (as used in xv, 2). These moulds, in the first place, are four in number, representing the four *koshas* (sheaths) which, in turn, produce fourteen other types (as mentioned in the *Sāmkhya Kārika* 53) which again, in turn, it is stated in the *Maitri Upanishad*, produces eighty-four varieties, and which Deussen thinks is just an arbitrary figure for "very many".

Arjuna uvācha

[21] *kair lingais trīn gunān etān*
atīto bhavati prabho
kimāchārah katham chai 'tāms
trīn gunān ativartate

Arjuna said:
By what marks, O Master, does he who has transcended those three modalities of nature become (recognized)? What (is his) conduct and how does he transcend those three modalities of nature?

Arjuna asks a question on the same topic which has been partially covered already, for a fuller philosophical discussion of the implications of the theory of the three modalities of nature when it is given its proper place in the larger context of wisdom.

Srībhagavān uvācha

[22] *prakāsam cha pravrittim cha*
moham eva cha pāndava
na dveshti sampravrittāni
na nivrittāni kānkshati

Krishna said:
Light and activity and delusion when present, O Pāndava (Arjuna), he is not dissatisfied nor hankers for them when absent.

In Krishna's words here the author has a fresh chance of bringing out as isolated values the main characteristics of the

three modalities conceived more theoretically and philosophically

Light, energy and delusion are the conditioning factors of the *bhutatman* (existential or elemental Self) The yogi under reference here who has transcended the *gunas* (nature-modalities) is able to deal with that aspect of his own Self which is under sway of these modalities, together with the other higher aspect of his own Self independent of these modalities, the latter being merely perceptual in its character By treating these two aspects on an equal footing it is suggested in this verse that a yogi transcends the modalities He is indifferent to the working of the modalities and to whatever conditionings or necessary types they might imply

[23] *udasinavad asino*
gunair yo na vichalyate
guna vartanta ity eva
yo 'vatishthati ne ngate

[24] *samaduhkhasukhah svasthah*
samaloshtasmakanchanah
tulyapriyapriyo dhiras
tulyanindatmasamstutih

[25] *manapamanayos tulyas*
tulyo mitraripakshayoh
sarvarambha parityagi
gunatitah sa uchyate

He who, seated as a neutral, is not moved by the modalities of nature, who, thinking that the modalities of nature operate in rotation, who, standing apart is unmoved,

the same in pain and pleasure, at rest in himself, to whom a clod of earth and a stone and gold are alike, firm in attitude (alike) to loved and unloved who regards his being blamed or praised equally,

the same in honour and disgrace taking no sides as between friends or foes abandoning all initiation of works—he is said to have transcended the modalities of nature (*gunas*)

This sequence of three verses portrays the neutral and unconcerned, self sufficient attitude of one who has transcended the modalities In verse 23 he neutrally witnesses that aspect of his own Self which is conditioned by the three modalities, in a detached attitude of self reflection In other words he is able to criticize himself as an outsider, although he is able also to perceive the modalities conditioning his own nature

In verse 24, an attitude of self sufficiency, which refuses to be attracted or repelled by everyday values, good, bad or indifferent, or by considerations of wanting to love or be loved or praised, is implied

In verse 25, disaffiliation from society and the world of action is complete in the case of the person here The type to whom such a neutrality would apply would be to a sublimated *rajasik* (affective-active) person with whom values such as honour, enmity, etc, mentioned here would be pertinent as implied in ii, 34 Here we have one who is neutral where parties are concerned, with no fear or favour, and he never initiates action on his own

These three verses together constitute what might be called a full definition of one who has transcended the three *gunas* (modalities) When read in the spirit of the rest of the Chapter, these verses show that the *gunas* (modalities) are not to be respected in themselves, but only to be recognized in order that they may be transcended If Arjuna is to take this part of the Gita teaching seriously, how is it possible for him to take any initiative in fighting? This would be a pertinent question whose answer is simple Arjuna has never been asked to take such an initiative He is only asked not to drop the initiative already taken

[26] *mam cha yo 'vyabhicharena*
bhaktiyogena sevate
sa gunan samatityai 'tan
brahmabhuyaya kalpate

He also serves Me with a yoga of devotion, never deviating from the proper path, transcending these modalities of nature, he is considered fit for becoming the Absolute

This verse hearkens back from the discussion of the modalities to the familiar note of *bhakti* (devotion) pertaining to the

Bhagavatas of the Vasudeva religion The strict bipolar relation to be established with Krishna as a representative of the Absolute is the teaching running throughout the Gita as a kind of refrain

The expression *kalpate* (is considered fit) suggests that the devotee who has transcended the modalities is fully qualified to tread the path of the Absolute or even to become the Absolute The verse intends to underline the fact that there is no essential difference between the way of transcending the modalities in the preceding verses and the way of *bhakti* (devotion) as understood in the Gita

[27] *brahmano hi pratishtha ham*
amritasya vyayasya cha
sasvatasya cha dharmasya
sukhasyai kantikasya cha

For I am the basis of the Absolute and the unexpended nectar of immortality and the eternal way of right conduct and of lonely final happiness

The implication of the various attributes employed by Krishna to describe himself here has puzzled scholars and commentators Sankara himself gives two alternatives—one, that Krishna here represents the *Isvara sakti* (lordly power) capable of bestowing mercy and grace on the devotee—and two that Krishna represents the unconditioned Absolute which is the abode of the conditioned Absolute Ramanuja equates the *aham* (I) here with the emancipated soul while Madhva equates it with *maya* (principle of negation)

It is little wonder that this verse has given rise to so many divergent opinions As in many other places in the Gita there is a paradox hidden here and in determining the meaning in favour of a *parabrahma* (transcendent Absolute) or an *apara brahma* (immanent Absolute) we have to rely completely on the nature of the Chapter of which this verse is the conclusion

The existential or ontological aspect of the Absolute has been the main theme of this Chapter and consistently with this aspect in mind Krishna describes himself in the first place as the basic foundation of the transcendent Absolute The word *pratishtha* (basis foundation) may be likened to the pedestal supporting here the statue of the transcendent Absolute Krishna here describes himself as the ontological basis of the Absolute,

and explains that by being the basis he does not lose the status of representing higher values such as *amrita* (nectar of immortality) or *avyaya* (unexpended principle).

He is also the basis of all eternal ethical values connoted by the word *dharma* (right conduct) and even of happiness pure and simple.

The word *ekantika* (pertaining to the lonely way) is reminiscent of the Bhāgavatas to which context the Gita has been assigned by some scholars. The loneliness which is akin to the notion of *kaivalya* (pure lonely being-in itself) is also found in the favourite expression from Plotinus " the flight of the alone to the Alone" Krishna here says that he is the basis of that type of devotion which belongs to this order of a lonely flight of the devotee to the object of worship which is Krishna himself. Thus he is at the foundation of such one-pointed devotion which results in the supreme happiness referred to side by side with it.

The multiplicity of epithets applied to the Absolute and the implied paradox, prepares the way naturally for the mysterious tree referred to in the first verse of the next Chapter, a tree with roots above and branches below The Absolute can be spoken of in the present verse as having a basement below or, as the next verse opening a new Chapter says, as having roots above. The multiplicity of epithets here therefore prepares the way for what follows not only immediately in the next Chapter, but in the Chapters that remain, the last of which may be said to culminate in the notion of the *dharma* (right conduct) mentioned in this verse

iti srimad bhagavadgitāsupanishatsu brahmavidyayām
yogasāstre srikrishnarjunasamvāde
gunatrayavibhagayogo nama chaturdaso 'dhyāyah

Thus ends in the Upanishads of the Songs of God, in the Science of the Wisdom of the Absolute, in the Dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, the Fourteenth Chapter entitled The Unitive Way of Transcending the Three Nature-Modalities

CHAPTER XV

THE UNITIVE APPROACH TO THE PARAMOUNT PERSON

Purushottama-Yoga

THE vision revealed at the express request of Arjuna in Chapter XI was not meant to be one given to philosophical insight The essential content of the vision has now to be revised and restated in a more finalized philosophical form

Having described the character of *aparabrahma* (the immanent Absolute) in the previous Chapter, whatever one sidedness might have been left by such a treatment, as was necessary there, is here to be corrected The Chapters that follow deal with very objective values in life in the ethical, religious and other fields, which also makes it necessary to have a revision of the notion of the Absolute generally

In trying to meet these requirements the author feels called upon here to present a full notion of the Absolute, which would include at once both the immanent and transcendent aspects of the Absolute In doing so however, it is inevitable as we have already seen in the last verse of the previous Chapter, that paradoxes cannot be avoided, and the approach from two sides only heightens the mystery of the Absolute

Rightly it is stated in verses 10 and 11 that understanding is given only to those rare persons who are wisdom-eyed, and that even yogis cannot get it by mere effort, but must have intelligence that perfects yoga

The favourite image of a cosmic tree is resorted to by Krishna, who it must be noticed here speaks without being questioned There is no dialogue to disturb the eloquence of this Chapter The tree itself is meant to be a mystery reaching as it were from heaven to earth It is important to keep in mind that this mysterious tree has to be cut asunder with a certain severe relentlessness as recommended in verse 3 The tree is equated with the world of the Vedas and to think of cutting it down would be sacrilegious in the usual context of orthodoxy

The Gita s aversion to Vedism on one side as well as to atheistic materialism on the other side, is evident in numerous other places which we have cited already In this Chapter, the author makes Krishna speak directly on the very important subject of getting rid of every kind of relativist approach to the Absolute, including even what the Vedas imply This does not mean, however, that the Gita is heterodox This should be quite evident from XVI, 24, where there is a return to a form of revised orthodoxy, and where Arjuna is definitely asked not to disregard the *sastras* (scriptural texts)

The whole of Chapter XVII is again devoted to what comes under religious values, which succeeds in formulating a new or revised way of life which can be said to be neither orthodox nor heterodox, but in conformity with the recognition of the main subject of this Chapter where the Supreme spirit is lifted high above both relativist and non relativist levels

Sribhagavan uvacha

[1] *urdhvamulam adhahsakham*
asvattham prahur avyayam
chhandamsi yasya parnani
yas tam veda sa vedavit

Krishna said
They speak of an unexpended (holy) fig tree (*asvattha*) with roots above and branches below whose leaves are sacred verses he who knows it is a Veda knower

The cosmic tree with roots above and branches below, from which latter sprout the leaves representing the Vedic hymns, taken as a whole, corresponds to what a person well versed in the Veda is likely to understand about spirituality The tree therefore represents the *purva pakshin s* (anterior critic s) position in this Chapter, which is to be replaced by the finalized version of spirituality given by Krishna

The expression *veda vit* (one who knows the Vedas) is equated indirectly to the knower of the *asvattha* (the holy fig tree or *ficus religiosa*) implied here The tree has been the symbol of reality viewed from the angle of time or relativity and has been used allegorically to explain subtle truths of the relativist world in various Upanishads of which the *Katha Upanishad* (VI, 1) is the chief reference Slight variations of the same picture occur

in the *Maitri Upanishad* (VI, 4), and *Svetāsvatara Upanishad* (III, 9 and VI, 6)

Such a tree is not unknown in the Indian *Puranas* (legends) either, and is common also to the religious legends of pre-Christian Europe The most important feature about the tree here is that its roots are above This is suggestive of the fact that all spiritual values derive their strength and nourishment from something hypostatically raised above the actualities of life In other words God may be said to be the source of all such values and he is not on earth but in heaven This is the case in most religions except those that are rational such as Buddhism

The Vedic gods are all nature gods who live in a world called *svarga* also said to be above The tree should therefore be understood as representing all multifarious branchings of everyday spiritual values which we find in the world of men, all of which have their nourishment from some hidden source which could be referred to as being above

[2] *adhas cho 'rdhvam prasritās tasya sakha*
gunapravriddha vishayapravālah
adhas cha mūlāny anusamtatani
karmānubandhini manushyaloke

Below and above spread its branches, nourished by the modalities of nature (*gunas*), sense-values its buds, and downwards also there are ramified roots which bind to action in the world of men.

The tree, more elaborately described here, is summarily called sometimes the tree of *samsara* (relative existence of a cyclic nature), but inasmuch as the text takes great pains to refer in detail to each part of this tree, to relate it to aspects of *samsara* (relative cyclic existence) it would be justifiable to linger a little on this verse

1 The branches are said to grow upwards and downwards; the upward growing branches being values in the context of holiness or ostentatious forms of religion, the downward growing branches being values tending to be more earthy or at least based on tangible realities of life

2 The branches are said to be nourished by the modalities of nature, the *gunas*, the upward growing branches may therefore correspond to the pure-clear or *sāttvik* tendencies in nature,

while the inert-dark or *tamasik* nourishes the more earthy branches, and the affective active *rajasik* may be said to nourish those branches not specifically mentioned here which radiate horizontally in the mass, as in the world of actions and agents

3 The buds or sprouts correspond to the ever-growing interests of man, reaching out to objects that give him pleasure In the manner in which this picture here is conceived, there is no strict differentiation between the subjective and the objective aspects of any item Thus the sprout represents both the senses and sense-objects which result in pleasures, interests or values

4 There are also roots that grow downwards, besides the main roots above These roots have ramifications and may be supposed to keep those interested in ritual or other active forms of spirituality enmeshed and helplessly caught within their tangle of conflicting interests belonging to each family, tribal or group tradition All obligations, taboos, laws and other necessary aspects connected with spiritual or even everyday life interests may be said to be represented by these multiple tangled spreading roots

The roots here correspond to necessity, for necessity does not originate above It belongs to the earth and therefore such roots are below As we know from other parts of the Gita, necessity itself is beginningless and these downward roots are represented as reaching to subtle aspects of the unmanifested reality lying below or beyond the earth, in the same way as the main roots are directed to the transcendental Supreme, which is also unmanifest Further, the downward roots may be spoken of as referring to retrospective values, such as instinctive respect for ancestral traditions

[3] *na rupam asye 'ha tatho 'palabhyate*
na 'nto na cha 'dir na cha sampratishtha
asvattham enam suvirudhamulam
asangasastrena dridhena chhittva

[4] *tatah padam tat parimargitavyam*
yasmin gata na nivartanti bhuyah
tam eva cha 'dyam purusham prapadye
yatah pravrittih prasrita purani

Nor is its form here comprehended thus (as stated), nor its end, nor its beginning, nor its foundation

Having sundered this holy fig tree with strongly fixed roots with the weapon of decisive non attachment,

then (alone) that path is to be sought treading which they do not return again (thinking) I seek refuge in that Primordial Man from whom of old streamed forth active (relativist) manifestation

These verses explain further the nature of the tree It is not to be taken as something definitely fixed or concrete It is of the order of a comprehensive philosophical vision referring to the world of relativist interests in all values and in all their bearings and aspects together

Even such a vision is not given to ordinary people of the world especially where it concerns its origin and termination How it holds itself in a realistic or pragmatic sense in the world of action is indicated by the word *sampratishtha* (foundation)

Verse 3 goes on to say that all these values including some very dear to the context of Vedic religion at least as understood till the time of the Gita have to be mercilessly cut down The roots are called *suvirudha* (strongly fixed) and in view of the fact that some roots go downward and the main root is from above it is legitimate to think that when it is recommended to cut these roots both sets of roots are included

On one side man is attached to values belonging to the pure domain of the holy and at the other extremity there is a multiple tangle of minor items of ancestral tribal caste or other instinctive traditional values which bind the spirit of man as much as the purer religious ideas that have roots above These two sets of roots are to be cut down by the *asangasastram* (weapon of non association non attachment) This weapon has to be be strong and suggests that the non attachment has to be decisive and determined and not of a lukewarm kind

When all these conditions have been fulfilled then only is a person ready according to verse 4 to tread the other path which is called *padam tat* (that way)

The difference between the former relativist path and the present one is indicated by one expression only which is meant to make all the difference between them This difference consists in that while in the former path the spirit would be caught in a cyclic process which would bring it back to human birth as stated in IX 20 and 21 in the latter case there is no question of return at all

Na nivartanti bhūyah (no return at all) is a familiar idiom in the Upanishads and in allied writings. It distinguishes the Absolute way from the way of cyclic relative existence called *samsāra*. To distinguish between these two ways is of crucial importance in understanding the import of the Upanishads and higher contemplative literature in general, including the Gita, which itself definitely belongs to this category.

The *ādyam purusha* (Primeval Man) in verse 4 seems to introduce something of a religio-mythical imagery not in keeping with the purity of the way and the vision suggested by these two verses. But when we remember that this Chapter is intended to extol the Supreme spirit which transcends the other two *purushas* (spirits) spoken of in verse 16 later, we can see that the reference here is to bring the discussion in line with the subject of this Chapter by referring to both the aspects. Verse 18 further mentions that such a Supreme spirit is not unknown even to the Vedas (although the Vedas are mainly dualistic or relativist) for it is implied in the references to the Vedas to the monotheistic one God, often called *ekadeva* (the Most High God).

In its visible aspects, the creative vision is comparable to a stream. In the favourite Vedāntic simile of a mirage, it is normal to speak of water or a stream emerging out of the illusion. The *pravritti prasritā* (streaming, manifesting) that the visible here represents, has its agent behind it known mythologically as the Primeval Man.

The cyclic existence of relative life is the activity initiated by this Primeval Man. When the *purushottaman* (Supreme Spirit) of this Chapter is meditated upon as such a One behind, and not as part and parcel of relative existence, such an adoration cannot be considered as outside the scope of an absolutist way pictured here. The mythological reference does not compromise the absolutist character of the vision recommended.

[5] *nirmānamohā jitasangadoshā*
adhyātmanityā vinivrittakāmāh
dvandvair vimuktāh sukhaduhkhasamjnair
gachchhanty amūdhāh padam avyayam tat

Those who are neither proud nor deluded, who have overcome the evil of attachment, who are ever constant to that (value) which pertains to the Self, whose passions are withdrawn, who are beyond the opposing

dual factors known as pleasure pain, and who are non foolish, wend that way of life which knows no decay

Further attributes of a man who conforms to the absolutist way of life recommended in the previous verse are given here These should be taken to be minimal rather than maximal requirements The reference to being without *manah* (pride) and *mohah* (delusion), for example, touches the same perceptual stratum of the personality as revealed in XIII, 7, where *amanitvam* (absence of social pride) is mentioned as the first item

The expression *adhyatmanitya* [constant to the (value) that pertains to the Self] refers to a factor more subjective than the *anahamkara* (egolessness) of XIII, 8 As the *atma* (Self) is identical with the Absolute, the persons referred to here may be said to belong to the absolutist way rather than to the relativist

Dvandva (dual opposing factors) which is different from duality philosophically understood refers to such examples as those given in XIII, 6 like desire aversion, and pleasure pain, etc Heat cold may also be cited as such an opposing pair of dual factors The unitive way of the absolutist is marked by dealing with these pairs indifferently as belonging to the necessary context of existence

The term *amudhah* (non foolish) marks the lowest limit of the minimal requirements for walking in the path of wisdom To be sufficiently intelligent is the minimum for contemplation

The epithet *avyayam* (unexpended eternal) as applied to the state or path of the Absolute also marks the lowest limiting factor which differentiates the Absolute from the relative

The two *purushas* (spirits) are seen to be differentiated on the same basis in verse 16 later

[6] *na tad bhasayate suryo*
na sasanko na pavakah
yad gatva na nivartante
tad dhama paramam mama

The sun does not illumine That nor the moon nor the fire, That is My supreme abode from which, having reached they return not

Here follows a description of the supreme Absolute highly reminiscent of almost similar words in the *Katha Upanishad* V, 15,

Mundaka Upanishad II, ii, 10, *Svetasvatara Upanishad* VI, 14 and *Maitri Upanishad* VI, 24 The non phenomenal or super phenomenal nature of the Absolute is particularly stressed here The word *paramam* (supreme) however, gives a transcendental slant to the description, which is to be quickly balanced by the next verse Verses 12 and 13 later also refer to the transcendental and ontological aspects of the Absolute in more concrete terms bringing them closer to reality or phenomenal existence The top of the holy fig tree might correspond to what is implied, while the bottom of the same tree might apply to what follows in the next verse

[7] *mamai 'va 'mso jivaloke*
jivabhutah sanatanah
manah shashthani ndriyani
prakritisthani karshati

A qualitative unit even of Mine which is eternal having become life in the world of life, attracts (to itself) the senses—of which the mind is the sixth—which abide in nature

The supreme Absolute of the previous verse descends as it were, to where nature operates, and there attracts to itself the mind and the senses without itself losing its pure status as a value, as indicated clearly by the word *sanatana* (eternal) The emphasis on *eva* (even) underlines this fact, so that the reader may not miss it.

The *loka* (world) which consists of *jiva* s (living beings) may be said to belong to both the higher world of life as an abstract principle and to life expressed through nature

It is said here that the Absolute first becomes or, in other words descends downwards to this dichotomous world of life, and what it does there is expressed by the word *karshati* (attracts) What it attracts is also clearly stated First it attracts from nature the mental qualities belonging to nature, then the five others which are the senses to which mind itself is the sixth and more central factor As indicated by the word *prakritisthani* (abiding in nature) all these items belong to nature

Life which is an expression of the Absolute belonging to it, and homogeneous with it is here said to form part of it, although strictly the Absolute cannot be thought of as having a part just as quality cannot have any parts As the spark of a

fire is qualitatively the same as the fire, there is no real change implied Sankara gives the example of sunlight seen through reflection which is the same as the sunlight directly perceived, but there is nothing corresponding to reflection here in this verse and to that extent his example is unacceptable

The Absolute, while still retaining its quality as the Absolute, here becomes *jiva* (life) which attracts its nature counterparts The individual soul as a partial expression of the Absolute can belong only to the *kshetra* (field) or actual side belonging to nature We tend to agree with Ramanuja when he places the senses and the mind on the side of nature, and when he says that the soul is an actual qualitative unit of God the Absolute

Many writers have tended to transfer the spark or portion of the Absolute which pertains to *jiva* (life) to the lower nature of the Absolute, but VII, 5, makes it clear that life belongs to the transcendental aspect and not to the lower aspect There is no harm in the former view if the implications of XIII, 26 are properly understood Even in the light of what is contained in this present Chapter, in the next two verses, where the counterparts of the attraction are clearly stated, we can see that the attracting element, taking possession of the mind and the senses, belongs to the side of *Isvara* (God) corresponding to *kshetrajna* (the knower of the field) or the perceptual, rather than to *kshetra* (the field) or the actual

How a neutral *Brahman* (the Absolute) could attract the senses or be attracted by them is a problem of the utmost delicacy, as admitted by the author in verses 10 and 11 It corresponds to the implications of the similar delicate theory of Cartesian occasionalism

[8] *sariram yad avapnoti*
yach cha py utkramati isvarah
grihitvai 'tani samyati
vayur gandhan iva 'sayat

When the Lord takes a body and when He leaves it,
He takes these (mind and senses) and goes even as the
wind gathering scents from their retreats

Verses 8 and 9 contain a theory about one of the most puzzling features of philosophical inquiry how nature and mind interact and whether it is in the form of a mere psycho-physical parallelism These are questions which have been problems

for both philosophers and psychologists, and modern experimental psychology has not brought us any nearer to the solution Bold biological approaches have also been made by eminent scientists like Schrodinger Heredity itself is only vaguely understood, and the transmission of specific qualities from parent to progeny is located in the chromosomes or polar bodies Some have gone further and named more subtle media in the transmission of parental characteristics

In India itself reincarnation has been theorized about in various ways Some speak of a subtle or astral body which is able to float in the atmosphere Others rely on memory factors None of them, however, is as pointed and simple as that presented in these two verses 8 and 9, which is as far as normal intelligence can delve into the matter

In verse 8 the most important point to notice is that there is a reference on the one hand to subtle retreats where certain factors can lie dormant, and on the other hand a reference to something expansive like the wind which can carry away these very subtle factors in their own kinetic form Further clarification of how this is done is very cleverly accomplished by bringing in the analogy of a flower and its scent

The flower as a part of a mere vegetable cannot by itself diffuse its dormant subtle quality of scent It requires somebody to smell it No rose can itself be the enjoyer of its own perfume Thus the joy of the scent implies an agent external to the flower Sunshine and wind playing on the flower make a dormant smell principle express itself as a value called scent which we can appreciate

A subtle interaction of the counterparts is therefore implied here, and where this takes place is just that point where the *kshetra* (field) or actual meets the *kshetrajna* (knower of the field) or the perceptual

While it is easy to imagine how the Lord here can take subtle perceptual smell factors away from their fine retreats when he goes away to another body, it is somewhat harder to imagine how in taking a body, he brings the sense qualities to bear on the nature side This is left to the imagination of the contemplative reader in this verse When we know that it is only the perceptual aspect of a smell value that is involved in this statement, it is not too difficult to fill in the gap by ourselves

[9] *srotram chakshuh sparsanam cha*
rasanam ghranam eva cha

adhishthaya manas chā 'yam
vishayan upasevate

> Presiding over the ear, the eye and touch, taste and smell, and also the mind, this one avails himself of the values relating to the senses

The doubt which was left in verse 8 is somewhat cleared here where the converse process is stated It is as a presiding principle, as the term *adhishthaya* (presiding over) definitely suggests, that *ayam* (this one) *i e*, the Lord, approaches its own counterpart in nature The relation will be clarified further if read with XIII, 22

Even when we admit that the presiding principle of the *kshetrajna* (knower of the field) or the perceptual is closely put in contact with the mind and the five senses, we have to imagine a thin film at least separating it from being mixed with the *kshetra* (the field) or the actual side It has been pointed out in XIII, 34, that the nature of the separation between the perceptual and the actual requires the eye of wisdom to understand, and in XIII, 2, that it constitutes the core of wisdom itself The two verses following the present one underline the same difficulty

Besides the status of merely presiding over the senses, when the Lord even makes use of the senses, as meant by the term *upasevate* (avails himself), there is a certain degree of indirectness implied between the Lord or *kshetrajna* (knower of the field) or the perceptual principle itself and the senses as such How the contact between the two compartments is established remains as much a mystery as ever The purest notion of the Absolute knows no duality, and it is through the mediation of this most subtle of principles that the interaction may be said to be established

[10] *utkramantam sthitam va 'pi*
bhunjanam va gunanvitam
vimudha na nupasyanti
pasyanti jnanachakshushah

> Whether departing, staying or experiencing conditioned (as they are) by the modalities of nature the foolish cannot see the wisdom-eyed can see

Here we find a new reference to the three *gunas* (modalities of nature) dealt with in the last Chapter. When the perceptual presiding principle which belongs to the *kshetrajna* (knower of the field) avails itself of sense-values as stated in the last verse, besides being conditioned by the specific values of each sense itself, it is also conditioned by the modalities of nature which imply greater or lesser attachment to sense-values, according to the dominance of one or other of the three

When *rajas* (affective active) modality of nature prevails, sensuality has a magnified value, when *sattva* (pure-clear) modality prevails, sense values occupy the background of consciousness, and when *tamas* (inert-dark) modality prevails, each sense-value tends to be magnified beyond any limitations that actuality might impose

This kind of contact varies also in kind or degree, depending on whether the Lord is departing, staying or enjoying life When all these variants, due to *gunas* (modalities of nature), involved in departing, or with stages of life, and depending upon each of the senses or mind values, have to be thought of as in operation simultaneously, the mode of operation becomes difficult, even for a philosopher, to vividly picture to himself It requires the eye of wisdom, the penetrative and intuitive vision of a wise man, which only rare individuals possess

[11] *yatanto yoginas chai 'nam*
pasyanty atmany avasthitam
yatanto 'py akritatmano
nai 'nam pasyanty achetasah

The yogis striving also perceive this One established in the Self, though striving, those yogis of imperfected Self, lacking wisdom, do not see this One

Penetrating into the subtle way whereby nature and spirit interact is not within the usual normal vision even of yogis True yogis may attain to it by effort, but yogis who lack intelligence, being consequently unfinished or imperfected products of the discipline of yoga, cannot attain to this insight

In other words this verse suggests that yogic perfection has complementary to it an element of wisdom Inasmuch as it constitutes a discipline belonging to the *kshetra* (the field, or actual) yoga has to be met by its complementary counterpart

which must include wisdom in its composition to add the final touches of perfection to the best of yogis

The striving mentioned here covers this crowning wisdom element which normally is not within the reach of the yogi as such Wisdom and yoga have to go hand in hand to achieve the desired insight here As Sankara suggests, the pride of a yogi is an impediment to his vision As long as he is proud he is not wise in the sense inclusive of both actual and perceptual factors As stated in XIII, 7, as the first of the requirements for insight, the truly wise is without pride

[12] *yad adityagatam tejo*
jagad bhasayate khilam
yach chandramasi yach cha gnau
tat tejo viddhi mamakam

That brilliance which reaches the sun and brightens the whole world that which is in the moon and the fire too, that brilliance know to be of Me

From this verse up to verse 15 forms a section which is meant to bring the two aspects of the Spirit discussed in this Chapter into one unified vision

Two aspects of reality are indicated in verses 12 and 13 in referring to sun, moon and fire on the one hand and on the other hand to more ontological aspects of reality such as the soil or earth, plants, etc. If we should think of these realities as representing values, we can imagine a line connecting the two sets

In verse 14 there is reference to the fire of life which digests food, as a middle value between these two extremities because it is both physiological in its function and cosmological in its derivation In verse 15 the meeting point of all values is located in the heart of man and understood in terms of consciousness with its prospective and retrospective aspects included

Thus in a vertical line the whole range of possible values, cosmological ontological or psychological are all included in these verses so as to form one comprehensive vision

The expression *mamakam* (Mine) in verse 12 suggests that the light of the luminaries is not to be understood as actual light as in physics but as the value-principle implied in luminosity

The expression *ādityagatam* (gone to or reaching the sun) would suggest that the Absolute here is at the centre of the universe radiating light to the luminaries at the periphery. The centralizing of the Absolute in the heart of man in verse 15 and even more mechanistically in XVIII, 61, takes place progressively from this Chapter onwards.

[13] *gām āvisya cha bhūtāni*
dhārayāmy aham ojasā
pushnāmi chau 'shadhīh sarvāh
somo bhūtvā rasātmakah

Permeating the earth, I sustain all elemental existences by (My) vitalizing heat-principle, and become *soma* (king of herbs of the Vedas) identical with sap (or taste); I also nourish all herbs.

Soma (a plant mentioned in the Vedas) covers many ontological values, such as its juice which is the life-giving drink of the gods. It can refer to Shakespeare's "watery moon" suggesting some principle of vitality or eroticism. *Soma* is also the presiding principle of the plant-world in general. From the potency attributed to it, it can be called a rare herb, the chief of all medicinal plants. It is stated here also that its essential nature is to be understood as identical with *rasa* (taste). Thus it covers values belonging to the lower nature of the Absolute, as mentioned in VII, 4, already once explained in VII, 8 and 9.

The reference to *aushadhīh* (medicinal herbs) taken together with *sarvāh* (all) may mean every plant that has some potency making it valuable to man, not excluding even food-crops such as wheat and rice.

The word *ojas* (vitalizing heat-principle) one of whose meanings as "vital warmth" puts it in line with the fire of life in the next verse, is not to be understood as just brute strength or vitality, but as a subtle principle traversing and strengthening all life. It is both invisible and ineffable. The soil is the supporter of life and life itself implies the values that all the other elements superior to the earth represent.

[14] *aham vaisvānaro bhūtvā*
prāninām deham āsritah
prānāpāna samāyuktah
pachāmy annam chaturvidham

> Having become the fire of life and resorting to the body of living creatures, uniting with the ingoing and outgoing vital energies, I cook (digest) the four kinds of food

The fire analogy still continues in this verse This time it is the very real fire which digests food It is found in all men, as the term *vaisvanara* (universal man) suggests Such a fire located in the stomach is spoken of in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* v, 9, *Maitri Upanishad* II, 6, VI, 17, etc Here the reference to *praninah* (breathing, living) extends the field of operation of this digestive fire to all beings, instead of only to men

SanKara suggests that what the fire consumes is the *soma*, the juicy essence of the plant of that name Here the four kinds of food cannot be *soma* juice, since the latter appears to be a liquid only, for the kinds of food must be based on solidity and other qualities as well

That the *prana* (vital energies) enter into this process of digestion and that there is a balance between the opposing ingoing and outgoing vital energies is also suggested here

[15] *sarvasya cha ham hridi samnivishto*
mattah smritir jnanam apohanam cha
vedais cha sarvair aham eva vedyo
vedantakrid vedavid eva cha 'ham

> And I am seated in the heart of all, from Me are memory and (positive) wisdom and its negative process, I am that which is to be known by all the Vedas, I am indeed the Vedanta maker and the Ved-knower too

The unitive way of referring to the Absolute is finalized in this verse where the Absolute is located in the heart of all It is not the physiological organ called the heart but the re-presentative of the centre of consciousness. Memory may be said to radiate retrospectively and other rays are directed to knowledge of a positive kind called here *jnana* (wisdom posi-tive), and its negative process called here *apohanam* (negative way of wisdom doubt removing) The latter expression is well known in Vedanta as the *neti neti* (not this not this!) method, otherwise *apavada* (eliminative method)

If *jnana* (positive wisdom) implies an ascent, *apohana* (negative process of wisdom) would imply the reverse If the supreme Absolute here is brought back to refer to the normal Self, then such a reverse process in knowing could be called *apohana*

The Absolute implied in the Vedas is what comes within the province of the three *gunas* (modalities of nature) as stated in ii, 45 The Absolute viewed from the relativist angle is implied by the words *vedaih* *vedyah* (to be known by the Vedas)

In the two expressions *vedantakrid* (Vedanta maker) and *vedavid* (Veda knower) there is a transposition of adjectives contrary to what is usual Veda being *karma kanda* (section on works) the word *krid* (maker) would be more suitable in the latter's content of ritual and obligations Vedanta is more concerned with the higher criticism of wisdom, with no question of action in it But the *krid* (maker) is here applied to it, which is somewhat puzzling Perhaps the author has the intention of referring to the Veda rid of its own obligatory aspect, thus equating it with Vedanta which, as presented in the Gita, is not without its own stress on practice

There are certain statements in the Vedas which do not refer to action, and likewise certain aspects of Vedanta which do involve practice All these attributes tend to give a neutral, central position to the Absolute between the two *purushas* (spirits) of the next verse, in order to indicate an Absolute which transcends both as in verse 17

[16] *dvav imau purushau loke*
ksharas cha kshara eva cha
ksharah sarvani bhutani
kutastho kshara uchyate

There are two Persons in the world, the Changing and the Changeless, the Changing comprises all beings and the mysteriously fixed is called the Changeless

After so many references to dual aspects of the Absolute, it would hardly be necessary to add to them here by reference to two *purushas* (spirits) But there is an implicit revalution In the first place both are called *purusha* (spirit, person), which

gives them each equal status, unlike the *purusha* (spirit) opposed to *prakriti* (nature) of the Samkhya (rationalist) philosophy, where it is in opposition as a polarity The duality which it was necessary to retain for purposes of methodical development of the finalized notion of the Absolute, as we have seen in some of the previous Chapters, where the higher and lower nature of Absolute and where the *kshetrajna* (knower of the field, the perceptual) and the *kshetra* (the field actual) together with *purusha* (spirit) and *prakriti* (nature matter) were distinguished is now discarded in favour of a completely unified concept which emerges finally in the next two verses

As we have said, the idea of a higher and lower Absolute is not unfamiliar to us as implied in xiv, 3 where the *mahad brahma* (great Absolute) is called the womb of all beings There was a subtle duality as between the sexes found there which is now abolished in favour of two *purushas* (spirits persons) both of which are masculine They are here values of equal status, only different in that one is changing and the other is changeless

The term *kutasthah* (rock seated *or* one veiled in mystery) is applied to the *akshara* (changeless) aspect of the Absolute, while what is changeful is applied to all beings How these two are counterparts of the one Supreme Person of verse 18 is a paradox or a mystery, similar to the relation between the large and the small the one and the many the infinite and the finite, etc , of Zeno the Eleatic. All that we can gather definitely from this verse is that there is an aspect of the Absolute subject to the process of becoming and another purer aspect, more mysterious and not subject to such a flux, change or becoming To whatever aspect or class the Absolute might refer, these have an equal status

Note Since the duality of *purusha* (spirit) and *prakriti* (nature) has been transcended at this point we shall henceforward be translating the word *purusha* by Person and not 'spirit' to bring out the equality of status assigned to these two *purushas*, or to both the higher and the lower aspects of the Absolute

[17] *uttamah purushas tv anyah*
paramatme ty udahritah
yo lokatrayam avisya
bibharty avyaya is arah

That Person Paramount, however, is another, called the Supreme Self who, the eternal Lord, pervading the three worlds sustains them

That the Absolute pertains to another order than that of the relative has been sufficiently stressed in this Chapter itself, when it is insisted in verse 3 that the fig tree, however holy or valuable in a religious context, had to be hewn down before the other path could be trodden Here the word *anyah* (other) stresses the same difference The vision of the two *purushas* (Persons) of the previous verse is as far as our relativistic reason can take us, but beyond the duality is a value that effectively covers and comprehends the values represented by the two Persons there

This Supreme Person is equated with *paramatman* (the Paramount Self) By being so understood, this notion here does not suffer in the theological status that belongs to it, as the all pervading Lord and Supporter of the universe

The *lokatrayam* (three worlds) refer to levels of values known on earth in the middle regions and in heaven The implication is that all values come within the range of this Supreme Principle

[18] *yasmat ksharam atito 'ham*
aksharad api cho 'ttamah
ato smi loke vede cha
prathitah purushottamah

Because I transcend the Changing and am even superior to the Changeless, there I am celebrated in the world and in the Veda as the Paramount Person (*purushottama*)

Here it is pointed out that the notion of *purushottama* (Paramount Person) is both popularly in use and, what is more that it is recognized in the Veda itself The idea is not an original invention of Vyasa based on any special philosophy of his own, but one that has obtained tacit recognition in the world and even in the Vedas which are mainly relativist in their conception of divinity

[19] *yo mam evam asammudho*
janati purushottamam

sa sarvavid bhajati mam
sarvabhavena bharata

> He who, undeluded, thus knows Me, the Paramount Person, he, the all knower, adores Me in all aspects, O Bharata (Arjuna)

The expression *sarvavid* (all knower) as applied to one who knows the Paramount Person specifically described here is justifiable, since all possible aspects of the Absolute have been comprehended in the notion Similarly the expression *sarva bhavena* (in all aspects) underlines the objective side of the same description Both the subjective and the objective aspects of the Absolute are said to be comprehended here in the description of the Absolute contained in this Chapter

[20] *iti guhyatamam sastram*
idam uktam maya nagha
etad buddhva buddhiman syat
kritakrityas cha bharata

> Thus this most secret doctrine has been taught by Me, O Sinless One (Arjuna), understanding this, one becomes wise, and one who has done with all works, O Bharata (Arjuna)

In this last verse the teaching here is called most secret The Gita itself is to be looked upon as a *sastra* (scientific and philosophical treatise) and this Chapter especially according to this verse is also so called because the discussion is of high philosophic import, and may be said to contain the finalized doctrine of the Gita as far as philosophy is concerned, the ethical, religious and other values being discussed in other Chapters

Krishna asks Arjuna not only to be illuminated, but also to feel that his work is done as suggested by the expression *kritakritya* (one of accomplished work) In other words, by understanding the full import of this Chapter as intended by the author, there is no need any more either to follow the injunctions of the Vedas or to tax one s brain by any further philosophical inquiry Matters of obligatory duties and theoretical research are both here terminated.

ity srimad bhagavadgitāsūpanishatsu brahmavidyayam
yogasastre srikrishnarjunasamvāde
purushottamayoga nama panchadaso 'dhyayah

Thus ends in the Upanishads of the Songs of God, in the Science of the Wisdom of the Absolute, in the Dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, the Fifteenth Chapter entitled The Unitive Approach to the Paramount Person.

CHAPTER XVI

THE UNITIVE WAY OF DISCRIMINATING BETWEEN HIGHER AND LOWER VALUES

Daivasura-Sampad Vibhaga Yoga

As A guide to conduct, it is necessary for each person to be able to recognize what is good from what is bad, in other words, to discriminate between the values belonging to life

In this Chapter there is an enunciation and description of values which have been divided and distinguished as belonging to the world of *devas* (divinities) and *asuras* (demons), from which we should understand references only to higher and lower values These have already been referred to in IX, 12 and 13

Even on a superficial scanning of the items constituting these sets of values, we can see that they do not conform to conventional social virtues, although such are not altogether omitted *e g*, reference to truthfulness is only indirectly mentioned in verse 7

If we should scan the list with religious values in mind, we find that almsgiving and offering sacrifices which would be laudatory acts in the orthodox religious context are degraded and listed among the demonic items in verse 15 Almsgiving, however, is given a sufficiently important place as the fourth item *danam* (gift) among the divine values in verse 1 Sacrifice is also mentioned there It is therefore not unwarrantable to assume that the values are not conceived along the usual orthodox or heterodox lines

The values are graded according to a principle which is neither strictly ethical nor religious but which arises independently from the epistemological frame of reference of the Gita itself Comparing the items with the higher and lower aspects of the Absolute enumerated in various previous Chapters, we can easily see how these higher values are derivatives from the higher attributes of the Absolute itself Taken together they represent an absolutist way of life and the first item itself,

which is fearlessness, sufficiently reveals what is meant by this absolutist way We shall have more to say when we come to the items themselves in the verses

It suffices for us to recognize here that these virtues or values, most of which are of an individual or personal kind, belong to a mystical or contemplative order They cannot be considered as social virtues or pertaining to a morality derived from popular opinion Such a world of popular opinion, where virtues have a Pharasaical character, fall outside the world of contemplation True contemplative values have their source in the superior world of the *purushottama* (Paramount Person), the Absolute of the previous Chapter, which represents the Value of values for the mystic or contemplative

Such values do not have difference as between one religious growth and another, and are not of the order of obligations, taboos or bans (for which see Bergson's *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* which deals with this subject)

We find here that the tone becomes rather harsh and crude In verses 19 and 20 we come up against a god who resembles an angry Jehovah, who will not be satisfied till he metes out strict justice The nature of the presiding god of this Chapter sinks definitely to the side of *karma* (action) or necessity

Necessity itself, in its most imperative form, is a principle that cannot be neglected or lightly brushed aside by a philosopher who is able to penetrate into reality as such As necessity itself is cruel and harsh, the tone of the Chapter has to change correspondingly This should not be taken to mean that the essential character of the Absolute as portrayed in the Gita as a whole is compromised or changed for the worse

The Chapter concludes by calling upon Arjuna to rely on the *sastras* (recognized scientific scriptural writings) The Gita does not recommend heterodoxy, but has its own version of what should be considered authoritative or canonical This is brought out in more detail in the last two Chapters, and especially in Chapter XVII in answer to the pointed question of Arjuna about a person who does not adhere to the *sastras* (scientific canons)

Sribhagavan uvacha

[1] *abhayam sattvasamsuddhir*
jnanayoga vyavasthitih
danam damas cha yajnas cha
svadhyayas tapa arjavam

[2] *ahimsā satyam akrodhas*
tyāgah santir apaisunam
dayā bhuteshv aloluptvam
mārdavam hrir achapalam

[3] *tejah kshamā dhritih saucham*
adroho na 'timanita
bhavanti sampadam daivim
abhijatasya bhārata

Krishna said
Fearlessness, transparency to truth, proper affiliation to unitive wisdom, attitude of generous sharing, self-restraint and sacrifice private perusal of sacred books, discipline and rectitude,

non hurting, truth, non anger, relinquishment, calmness, self integrity, compassion to beings, non-interest in sense-values, gentleness, modesty, non-fickleness,

alertness, forgiveness, fortitude, cleanliness, absence of malice, absence of excessive respectability these make up the divine (higher) values of anyone, O Bharata (Arjuna), born for them

These verses enumerate certain personal virtues or values characterizing a man belonging to a higher order of good men as understood in the Gita

The very first qualification *abhayam* (fearlessness) strikes the note of independence and self reliance rather than conforming to the requirements of any social system A philosopher becomes fearless in a sense in keeping with the rest of the Gita when he sees equally and neutrally, as stated in VI, 29 30 and 32, and in XIV, 23 There remains nothing for him to be afraid of outside himself, while death inasmuch as it implies no real change in his being, also fails to frighten him

The expression *sattvasamsuddhih* (transparency to truth) of verse 1, refers to the *purusha* (Person) called *kshara* (the changing) as described in the last Chapter the aspect of the Absolute belonging to the necessary context of life, and subject to the laws of changing nature The modality called *sattva* (pure-clear) helps the intelligence to arrive at truthful judgments

When this modality of nature acts in a perfectly transparent way, that would indicate what the expression here means

A good man is also one who has proper affiliation to the wisdom called here *jnana yoga* (unitive understanding) as known in the Gita This implies a certain steady loyalty to wisdom values

Danam (gift) only means readiness to share the goods of life with others and not ostentatious charity or almsgiving listed in verse 15 Here the giving is egoless

Again, self restraint contrasts with the attitude portrayed in verse 15 where a man says, "I will sacrifice" *Dama* (self restraint) belongs to the *nivritti marga* (negative way) and it is included in the six preliminary requirements of a wisdom seeker, such as *sama* (equanimity), *uparati* (disinterest in the non contemplative), *titiksha* (bearing without complaint the difficulties of the contemplative life), *sraddha* (confidence in the teaching and the *Guru*) and *samadhana* (constant recollective meditation)—these are the meanings given by Sankara in the *Viveka Chudamani* (verses 19 30)

The word *yajna* (sacrifice) need not infer limitation to Vedic sacrifices Worship itself is a form of sacrifice, as the word itself has been elsewhere employed in the Gita (IV, 25 30)

Svadhyaya (private perusal of sacred books) also conforms to the other virtues here in being non-ostentatious, self reliant and independent, as all contemplative virtues ought to be

In the light of XVII, 5, 6, 18 and 19, we should understand that the *tapas* (austerity) here is strictly within the contemplative way, and refers properly to discipline *Ārjavam* (rectitude) or sincere straightforwardness is also a quality referring to oneself and not to society

Most of the qualities of verse 2 are contemplative and negative or neutral, and requiring no explanation, except perhaps *apaisunam* (self integrity), meaning, leaving others alone, non interfering, and *aloluptvam* (non interest in sense values) Both of these refer to the self sufficiency of the individual

In verse 3 we have more commonplace virtues which do not need any philosophical understanding to cultivate, as they are of an existential order If we take the instance of *saucham* (purity) here it is more physical cleanliness than the transparency of spirit mentioned in verse 1 Again, *dhritih* (fortitude) indicates a stable quality reminiscent of the elemental principles of XIII, 5, that necessarily enter the make up of the Absolute

Na atimanitā (absence of excessive respectability) marks the lowest limit of inclusion among those higher or "divine" qualities, being the last-mentioned here. Good and sensitive people tend to exaggerate their own respectability or status. A certain degree of self-respect would be permissible to a godly man, but over-sensitivity in the matter would be a disqualification, as suggested by the prefix *ati* (excessive).

Some people tend to understand by the reference to birth here that there is a tacit acceptance of heredity, although the text properly scanned does not warrant such a definite view. Because many translators have rendered the meaning in such a way as to imply a distinction based on birth, we are tempted to make the following remarks

It is a fact, hardly to be denied, that good and bad people are found in the world To speak of them as belonging to different groups by the peculiarity of their birth does not mean that humanity is being summarily divided into sheep and goats depending on some status related to birth There is a complete theory put forward by the author in great detail, in whose light these divisions should be understood It is nowhere suggested in the Gita that birth is based on heredity. We should understand these distinctions as belonging to type-psychology based on the capacity to appreciate higher or lower values in life which do not always follow the lines of heredity. In fact Mendel's laws of heredity prove just the opposite We know also in common life that sons of the same parents can be poles apart in the respective types they represent.

[4] *dambho darpo 'bhimanas cha*
krodah parushyam eva cha
ajnanam chā 'bhijatasya
partha sampadam āsurim

Pretentiousness, arrogance and a sense of self importance, anger, and harshness also and ignorance these, O Pārtha (Arjuna), make up the demonic (lower) values of anyone born for them.

The items under *āsuric* (demonic) values reveal a kinship with either *rajas* (affective-active modality of nature) and *tamas* (inert-dark modality) rather than with *sattva* (clear-pure modality). Except for *ajnana* (ignorance) all of them are

characterized by an enlargement of the ego Egoism is therefore the principal enemy of the contemplative in the Gita doctrine, whether that ego gets expressed through *tamas*, *rajas* or even *sattva*

The personal value of honour, implicit in the word *abhimana* (high sense of self respect) here grouped with bad qualities, is referred to by Krishna himself as something to be seriously considered when he says in II, 34 that 'dishonour is worse than death" In the light of the status given to Arjuna in verse 5, that he is born with divine endowments, the contradiction implied becomes somewhat glaring But there Arjuna was only being introduced to positive values at a time when he was steeped in negation and regret The statement was, therefore, perhaps intended to whip him as it were, into a more positive attitude with sharply stinging words, as a form of treatment for his state of psychological regression The philosophy of Chapter II was highly theoretical and sweeping in its abstractions hence the reference to honour balanced correctly the abstract value system

The tail-end of demonic characteristics consists of ignorance pure and simple which belongs to a *tamasik* (inert dark) person

The word *abhijatasya* (born for) again suggests that some persons are by their very birth endowed with these qualities of the lower order We have explained how such birth does not conform with the lines along which heredity works Men or women themselves conform to different modalities of nature or types as understood in the light of the explanations given in Chapter XIV Arjuna is a *kshattriya* (warrior) and is almost directly addressed as such in II, 31 In verse 5 of the present Chapter Arjuna is definitely admitted in the group of people possessing high or divine endowments as enumerated earlier According to the division of necessary duties belonging to *kshattriyas* stated in XVIII 43 we find that despite the striking disparity between the qualities mentioned there and those of the *Manusmriti* (code of regulations of Manu the law giver), which includes sacrifices and learning the Vedas etc, there is also a further noticeable difference between the higher endowments of the present Chapter and *the necessary activities* conforming to the type called the *kshattriya* (warrior) of Chapter XVIII In later Chapters of the Gita rigid values of the world of necessary action gain primacy while here the *gunas* (modalities of nature) and endowments apply to a more flexible state of

the spirit. The matching of the type of spirit to its corresponding mould of necessity and actual situation is what the Gita recommends by these references to inborn traits To mix up in the mind the fluid traits of the spirit with the factors of necessity in the hard world outside would give us wrong notions in regard to the subtle theory put forward here and in XVIII, 41 ff That such matching of counterparts is in the mind of the author is clear from IV, 13

The Pandavas themselves, though brothers, represented widely different types, of whom only Arjuna is promoted by Krishna in the next verse, to the honour of belonging to the order of those who have the higher endowments which fit him for emancipation The type psychology of this Chapter and of Chapter XIV has to be understood with all its dynamic and organic implications and not statically or mechanistically interpreted to fit it into any clannish, tribal or caste framework

[5] *daivi sampad vimokshaya*
nibandhaya suri mata
ma suchah sampadam daivim
abhijato 'si pandava

The divine (higher) values are deemed to be for emancipation and the demonic (lower) for bondage (to necessity) do not regret, O Pandava (Arjuna), you are born for the divine (higher) values.

Bondage and liberation are the lowest and the highest points within whose limits any spiritual progress is to be accomplished The spiritual progress of any individual must depend upon his appreciation of or affiliation to spiritual values, such as those enumerated in this Chapter The two sets described are summarily distinguished here as those helping to emancipate and those tending towards necessity and bondage, Arjuna is assured that he is not gravitating towards bondage, because he belongs to a contemplative type capable of appreciating those negative individualistic non social and personal values which have been listed as divine This is to reassure him and save him from his tendency to regret.

[6] *dvau bhutasargau loke 'smin*
daiva asura eva cha

daivo vistarasah prokta
asuram pārtha me srinu

There are two (orders of) created beings in this world, the divine and the demonic, the divine have been described at length, hear from Me, O Partha (Arjuna), of the demonic

In this verse the values distinguished in the previous verses are applied to the whole world of created beings without particular reference to human types The object here is to examine the repercussions of these two types on what constitutes human environment and life in general rather than what refers to the subjective human spirit only

Bad men become a nuisance to society, as stated in verse 9 later, and involve others in distress A rather detailed description of bad men continues throughout the rest of the Chapter It seems to suggest strongly that the world has need of elimination of the evil resulting from bad natures and that God himself is not indifferent to such a necessity as stated in verses 19 and 20 There his role resembles that of a jailor or policeman or at least a magistrate, the only difference being that the punishment is in terms of degradation in the scale of contemplative values The offenders get caught more and more in necessity

[7] *pravrittim cha nivrittim cha*
jana na vidur āsurah
na saucham na 'pi chā 'chāro
na satyam teshu vidyate

The demonic men do not know the way of positive action nor the way of negative withdrawal, in them is found neither cleanliness, nor propriety in conduct, nor veracity

Those of the lower order described are neither intelligent, nor do they have any of the virtues that go to make a man really superior to others The minimum required to make a man distinctly intelligent is that he should be able to differentiate between *pravritti* (the positive way of action) and *nivritti* (the negative way of withdrawal) In everyday life he should have sufficient cleanliness as well as propriety in conduct. The

man of lower nature possesses neither of these qualifications Lastly, he lacks veracity

It is implied here that the correct way of life would be to be able to strike the balance between a forward and a negatively cautious game in life Both statesmanship and sportsmanship and even chivalry imply balancing correctly between the necessary and contingent factors of a given situation, while the unwise referred to in verse 4 lack exactly this inner capacity, just as in outward life they lack propriety and cleanliness

[8] *asatyam apratishtham te*
jagad ahur anisvaram
aparaspara sambhutam
kim anyat kamahaitukam

> They say that the world is without true existence, without a basis, without a presiding principle, not resulting from reciprocal factors (lying beyond immediate vision, as if asking) what else is there other than caused by lust?

To understand this verse we must first refer to II, 42 where the word *anyat* (something else, other) has almost the same sense as intended here There the follower of Vedism is condemned because he is a person who believes there is nothing else other than the immediate world of pleasures mundane or heavenly In other words he suffers from a lack of vision regarding the *purushottama* (Paramount Absolute Person) Then too, in XVIII, 16, it is again said that a person who isolates his ego from the larger scheme of reality in which the ego is but one link in the fivefold chain of necessity, as XVIII, 13 and 14 state, is a man of perverted intelligence

Putting together what is considered as wrong in these two references, and also taking them together with the gist of verses 13 and 14 later, we would be sufficiently justified in saying that the Gita teaching is against any such shortsighted, disjunct view of life There is what is called this side of life in which we are related to pleasurable events as simple isolated individuals, and there is the larger context both in time and space to which we also belong A short spanned interest in life would be wrong because it does not take a sufficiently comprehensive view of reality

What is more serious is the neglect of what is called *anyat* (the other) There are hidden values transcending even what heaven can offer Absolutist values belong to that order where pleasures recede to the background, and this order requires renunciation or detachment to appreciate

In the name of being rational or practical, many people can see only values close at hand under their nose, easily attained with quick results, as mentioned in IV, 12 Such people can be called materialists or sensualists, and include even those who cannot see beyond the pleasures of heaven They are all con demned in this verse Those who have that type of short span interests and who give an important place to the gratification of desires have a particular type of materialistic philosophy resembling what the Epicureans of ancient Greece and the Charvakas of ancient India are popularly supposed to re present (Charvaka s followers are sometimes called Lokaya tikas, *i e* worldly materialists) Even modern scientific materialism tends to conform to the pattern of thinking of such persons as described here

A short span interest within and a short sighted outlook is common to them all, and they do not see any deeper causes, either in the eternally necessary, or in the eternally contingent mentioned in XIII, 19

The reference to *pratishtham* (basis) as we can easily recognize, belongs to the necessary side corresponding to the synonymous *adhishthanam* (basis) of XVIII, 14 *Isvara* (Lord) on the other hand is a reference to a value belonging to a transcendental order To refuse to recognize these two extremities lying beyond the immediate vision of a materialist constitutes the error The word *anyat* (other), therefore, refers simultaneously to this two sided error of one who can neither recognize the deep based foundation of necessity in life, nor the transcendental Lord who is beyond the scope of pleasures

The world is not the product of action and reaction factors of the here and now It is the result of factors either deep seated or far beyond which by their reciprocity bring about the phenomenal world This theory is supported by XIII, 26 There is an interaction of hidden factors not immediately visible Even if an intelligent materialist is able to see two counterparts he can see them only lying within the world of desires He refuses to believe in any hidden forces beyond his perception and therefore pooh poohs the very idea of either deeper or transcendental factors

The expression *aparaspara sambhutam* (not resulting from reciprocal factors) refers to what the materialists cannot see, to what lies beyond their immediate vision At best the materialist sees a reciprocity between such immediate counterparts as the sexes whose union results in progeny His vision does not extend any further. Modern dialectical materialism may also be said to fall under this category inasmuch as it fails to admit any principle presiding over matter

[9] *etam drishtim avashtabhya*
nashtatmano 'lpabuddhayah
prabhavanty ugrakarmanah
kshayaya jagato hitah

Wilfully holding to this view, these (men) of lost souls, of little understanding, of harsh deeds, emerge as non beneficial, effecting the world s decline

From this verse onwards begins a transfer of interest from the person himself to the possible harm the evil man might do to the world The positive nature of the discussion has reached a point where objective realities of necessary life find full treatment in so far as they are directly related to problems of spirituality or even to the understanding of the full implications of the notion of the Absolute in its bearings on real or practical problems

[10] *kamam asritya dushpuram*
dambha mana madanvitah
mohad grihitva sadgrahan
pravartante suchivratah

Holding to insatiable desires accompanied by pretentiousness, arrogance and madness fondly grasping false values deludedly, they act with unclean resolves

This verse suggests that wilful and dogged addiction to evil can be present in almost as strong a manner as the loyalty to higher values in a good man A person with wrong notions can be as strongly cocksure or convinced in his views as one with right notions

By referring to values in this Chapter as divine or higher and as demonic or lower, it is intended to indicate the two factors

by contrast rather than comparison, so that the strong ambivalence as expressed in the world of values can stand out clearly in the mind of the reader The greater portion of humanity does not come under these extreme types which are purposely magnified here for the sake of clarifying the theory In this sense it would be but fair to remember here that humanity cannot be divided into good and bad

[11] *chintam aparimeyam cha*
pralayantam upasritah
kamopabhoga parama
etavad iti nischitah

[12] *asapasasatair baddhah*
kama krodha parayanah
ihante kama bhogartham
anyayena 'rthasamchayan

Engrossed with infinite cares lasting till doomsday, for whom desire and enjoyment is the supreme end, cocksure that such is the way,

bound by a hundred cords (consisting) of expectations given to lust and anger, they strive unfairly to hoard wealth for sensual enjoyment

In these verses there is no new idea other than what has been many times explained except the expression *kamopabhoga-paramah* (those for whom desire and enjoyment is the supreme end) Here we have for the first time a supreme status given to a value belonging to the here and now, to the order of everyday pleasure and enjoyment. The term covers all values of a non-contemplative order, because contemplative values inevitably imply detachment from sense-values

The term *anyayena* (by unfair means) in verse 12, refers to injustice which in the contemplative context, can only mean violation of the principle of equality towards all

[13] *idam adya maya labdham*
imam prapsye manoratham
idam asti idam api me
bhavishyati punar dhanam

[14] *asau maya hatah satrur*
hanishye cha paran api
isvaro 'ham aham bhogi
siddho 'ham balavan sukhi

[15] *adhyo 'bhijanavan asmi*
ko 'nyo sti sadriso maya
yakshye dasyami modishya
ity ajnana vimohitah

[16] *anekachitta vibhranta*
mohajala samavritah
prasaktah kamabhogeshu
patanti narake 'suchau

This today has been gained by me, this (particular) end I will get, this wealth is mine, and that wealth also will be mine,

that enemy has been killed by me and others I will also kill, I am the lord, I am the enjoyer, I have satisfied my ambitions, I am powerful and happy,

I am rich and well born, who else is like me? I will sacrifice, I will give, I will rejoice,—thus deluded by ignorance,

maddened by many thoughts, caught within the snare of confusing values addicted to lustful gratifications, they fall into an unclean hell

The description in these verses gives the picture of a man who is engrossed in himself and thinks only of the happiness of the moment. His life consists of disjunct bits of happiness of which the typical example is this today has been gained by me,' in the opening lines Another typical statement is I am rich of verse 15 which pertains to egoism which as we have said is the greatest enemy of the contemplative Even pride in religious acts is condemned as leading to bondage in verse 15

Verse 16 has an indirect description of what constitutes hell in terms of contemplation This corresponds to the ramifications of roots of the holy fig tree described in XV, 2, which bind human beings addicted to relativist values

[17] *ātma sambhāvitāh stabdhā*
dhana mana madānvitāh
yajante nāmayajnais te
dambhena 'vidhipūrvakam

Self-righteous, perversely immobile, filled with pride and intoxication of wealth, they perform sacrifices ostentatiously, which are (only) nominal sacrifices, not conforming to scriptural rules.

The *nāmayajnah* (nominal sacrifices) here are those made in the spirit of those Pharisees of the Bible who prayed in public to gain social status and not from truly spiritual motives (see also xvii, 12) The emphasis on scripture is the very note on which this Chapter ends The apparent orthodoxy of this Chapter is balanced by the ways of the heterodox also recognized in the next Chapter.

[18] *ahamkaram balam darpam*
kāmam krodham cha samsritah
mām ātma paradeheshu
pradvishanto 'bhyasūyakah

Resorting to egoism, force, insolence, lust and anger, these envious ones hate Me in their own and others' bodies.

The Paramount Person or Absolute itself is included in the torture implied in this verse as we shall see from xvii, 6 The Paramount Person here should be thought of as described in Chapter xv, and which covers more particularly the Changeless Self. That the body or the Changing is also included goes without saying. The torture implied in the case of the Paramount Person can refer at best to a global sense of suffering rather than any items of specific suffering.

[19] *tān aham dvishatah krūrān*
samsāreshu narādhaman
kshipāmy ajasram asubhan
āsurishv eva yonishu

[20] *āsurim yonim āpannā*
mūdhā janmani-janmani

mam aprapyai 'va kaunteya
tato yanty adhamam gatim

These cruel haters in the world, worst of men, I hurl unceasingly even into the degraded wombs of demons,

Attaining a demonic womb, deluded birth after birth, not reaching Me, O Son of Kunti (Arjuna), they go to the lowest state

The punishment here consists of being degraded to a low birth This should be understood as lowness in contemplative values as we have sufficiently made clear already The primitive idea of a hell of fire and brimstone is not envisaged here Ignorance alone itself constitutes the infernal punishment

[21] *trividham narakasye 'dam*
dvaram nasanam atmanah
kamah krodhas tatha lobhas
tasmad etat trayam tyajet

Triple is the infernal gate, destructive of the Self, lust, hate and greed, therefore these three should be avoided

The lowest vices to be avoided in order to be saved from utter degradation in the scale of spiritual values are mentioned here as consisting mainly of three The same items of utmost evil are again seen mentioned in XVIII, 53 Their avoidance would mark the lowest rung of the ladder of contemplative values Between this verse and XVIII, 53, the Gita touches crude aspects of necessity in life

[22] *etair vimuktah kaunteya*
tamodvarais tribhir narah
acharaty atmanah sreyas
tato yati param gatim

A man who has abandoned these three gates of darkness, O Son of Kunti (Arjuna), observes what conduces to his progress, and thereafter attains to the supreme path

This verse coming at the close of this Chapter serves the purpose of indicating that by referring to the triple infernal gate of verse 21 the whole series of higher and truly contemplative values have all been passed in review whether in this Chapter or others We remember that in the first three verses which began with the value called *abhayam* (fearlessness) all the positive or higher contemplative values were enumerated The greater portion of this Chapter was devoted to a discussion of the lower, negative or demonic values which came to a termination with the reference to the triple infernal gate of verse 21 It will be noticed on scanning the items enumerated in the first four verses of this Chapter that they are both ethical and contemplative values at the same time. The triple infernal gate (lust, hate and greed) refer to negative values that are to be avoided They may be called vices but when we see ignorance included as a vice we have to understand that they rather refer to contemplative drawbacks rather than to moral failures in the social sense To be saved from lust, hate and greed mentioned in verse 21 is very important for the spiritual progress envisaged in the Gita Hence it is that as a last resort the Gita decides in favour of a general reliance on the *sastras* in the next two final verses The present verse must be treated as a mark of punctuation between the section which enumerates the lower or evil values that can compromise contemplation, and the suggested remedy against falling into evil.

[23] *yah sastravidhim utsrijya*
vartate kamakaratah
na sa siddhim avapnoti
na sukham na param gatim

[24] *tasmach chhastram pramanam te*
karyakarya vyavasthitau
jnatva sastra vidhanoktam
karma kartum iha 'rhasi

He who having abandoned the guiding principles of scripture acts under the promptings of desire, he cannot attain perfection nor happiness, nor the supreme path

Therefore the scripture is your authority in deciding what should and should not be done Understanding

> what is indicated for guidance in scripture it is right
> you should work here

Fearlessness is at the head of the series of higher values and, as we notice in verse 4 ignorance reveals the tail-end of the lower values enumerated The gamut of contemplative ethical values are passed in review in this Chapter with more space being devoted to lower values The limit was indicated in the triple gate of inferno referred to in verse 21 These last verses here make a final appeal to the canonical writings called the *sastras* to give Arjuna any directions in matters which lie beyond the scope of contemplative values Whether it is the Vedas or the *Dharma Sastras* (codified scriptural injunctions) or even the Upanishads that are meant by the reference to *sastras* (canonical scientific treatises) is not important for us to decide All scriptures whether in or outside India tend to draw people away from such factors as the three items of lust, hate and greed of verse 21 In fact no scripture would be even worth the name without this basic qualification

Every man is likely to follow some scripture or other, especially if he is religious minded Even irreligious people have their own authorities whom they consult Even atheists swear in the name of some favourite writers Inasmuch as such writings contribute to the abandonment of the three vices mentioned and help a man to decide what should and should not be done (as in verse 24) such guidance must be acceptable to whatever regional religious or traditional background they might belong Conformity to scripture as recommended in these two verses should be understood in this larger and more general sense

The Chapter began with fearlessness as the first mentioned value and ended with the triple vices of darkness to be avoided In the latter it touched the lowest water mark of a life of contemplation and recommended reliance on some written authority to save the ordinary man from falling into error or of degrading himself further spiritually

Thus seemingly conservative recommendation will be re
lieved by a more discriminating way of life involving faithful
affiliation to what can be included under religious values,
which are not merely ethical in the next Chapter This
Chapter prepares us to take one more step into the field of
necessary life in the next Chapter which in principle can be
called a Chapter on contemplative religion just as the present

in principle can be called a Chapter on contemplative ethics

ity srimad bhagavadgitāsupanishatsu brahmavidyayam yogasastre srikrishnarjunasamvade daivasurasampadvibhagayogo nama sodaso 'dhyayah

Thus ends in the Upanishads of the Songs of God, in the Science of the Wisdom of the Absolute, in the Dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna the Sixteenth Chapter entitled the Unitive Way of Discriminating between Higher and Lower Values.

CHAPTER XVII

THE UNITIVE RECOGNITION OF THE THREE PATTERNS OF FAITH

Sraddhatrayavibhagayoga

We should notice first a difference of approach between this Chapter on patterns of faith and the previous Chapter, where endowments were the subject We revert here to the theory of the three modalities of nature discussed in Chapter xiv

The modalities were theoretically discussed there and then in Chapter xv the two *purushas* (spirits persons) were discussed, and the modalities entered into the treatment only indirectly and partially, i e in so far as the changing aspect of the Absolute was concerned We have already noticed the equal relation between the two *purushas* (spirits persons) and the asymmetrical relation between the *kshetra* (field or actual) and the *kshetrajna* (knower of the field or perceptual) of Chapter xiii at least in so far as the latter related to *prakriti* (nature) and *purusha* (spirit) respectively

In giving an equal symmetrical status to the two *purushas* or persons of Chapter xv their complexion and character changed They became value factors rather than philosophical ent ties These value factors formed the basis of Chapter xvi where divine and demonic or high and low endowments were con trasted We have already noticed that for purposes of contrast in Chapter xvi the picture of each type involved represented extreme limits omitting any reference to intermediate cases where both kinds of endowments entered in

In the latter half of Chapter xvi we noticed further that instead of dealing with subjective endowments the repercussions in the world of men especially of demonic types was discussed This present Chapter naturally passes onwards from that point by revolving round a subject which is named *sraddha* (faith)

Faith is not a matter which is wholly subjective The faith of a person is expressed by his life and interests and what might be called his pattern of behaviour There might even be

conformity of patterns of behaviour based on the faith belonging to groups who behaved according to some common single pattern Such are popularly known as religious groups The observances that the members of such groups adopt mark them out from others

In India religious observances of this kind have conformed to three different kinds which have been mentioned in various parts of the Gita These are the observances of sacrifices bestowing gifts, and austerity or penances Each of these has a recognized discipline in their particular scriptures

Here the express question of Arjuna is about those who fall outside the pale of orthodoxy, which includes the greater mass of people in the whole world Consistent with the thoroughly catholic and non-exclusive character of the Gita teaching as revealed in such verses as IV, 11, Krishna here enunciates a kind of rule of thumb by which faith could be judged to be good, bad or indifferent, without resorting to technical details relating to each scripture This kind of simplified appraisal of scriptural norms of faith is an applied corollary of the theory of the three modalities of nature so carefully developed in Chapter XIV

After leaving out the subject of the three modalities of nature in the previous two Chapters, the present reversion to it is further understandable because of the fact that beginning from this Chapter, and up to verse 53 of the next and last Chapter, the author proposes to deal with overt expressions of spirituality in group or in individual life, so as to be able, degree by degree, to come to the necessary action of Arjuna in a pointed manner as applied to the harsh and mechanistic fixed context of a war situation

The charge that Krishna is going to make finally against Arjuna in XVIII, 59 is that Arjuna s egoism would be detrimental to his wisdom We have thus two factors the ego of Arjuna on the one hand, and the necessary action that he is impelled to do by a conspiracy of natural circumstances on the other hand The action is outward, and the ego of Arjuna belongs to an inner philosophical order The whole problem of the Gita is to make these two factors come together unitively without leading to absurdities in life

With a view to leading up to such a culminating discussion there is a gradual emphasis on the outward aspects of the ego or Self in its various modalities conditionings or dispositions Modalities of nature and conditionings have been covered

already Now in the present Chapter we come to dispositions *vis-a-vis* factors called faith.

Even a man's attraction to a certain type of food can reveal his pattern of interest in life In the observances of many religions great stress is laid on foods that are taboos or considered sacred, and on others that are permitted Hindus will not touch beef and *Muslims and Jews ban pork The inclusion* of such a seemingly trivial subject in this list of faiths which are good, bad or indifferent, must be intended to serve diagnostic purposes

By finally referring to the *maha-vākyam* (Great Utterance, *i e* a philosophical formula of Vedanta), *Aum-tat sat* (Absolute-Word-That is real), the author here is able to find one supreme formula for correlating all forms of spiritual expression or faith wherever found This follows the Upanishadic pattern of revaluation It cannot be considered as exclusive, even of Vedism, against which the Gita has many times had to speak *disparagingly. Note that the Vedas are brought into the context* of this revalued spirituality in verse 23 later.

Arjuna uvācha

[1] *ye sastravidhim utsrijya*
yajante sraddhaya 'nvitah
tesham nishtha tu kā krishna
sattvam aho rajas tamah

Arjuna said
What is the status in faith, O Krishna, of those who, discarding scriptural injunctions, sacrifice with faith, pure clear (*sattva*), affective-active (*rajas*) or inert-dark (*tamas*)?

The catholicity of the Gita teaching as a whole is unmistakably evident in IV, 11, where it states *that all men without* exception walk the path of the Absolute represented by Krishna. In the light of such a statement it is unwarranted for us to doubt that the Gita teaching is confined in any way to any set of orthodox scriptures, without which the salvation or the goal would be denied to any person To so deny would detract from the Gita's universal appeal After the insistence on the scriptures at the end of the previous Chapter, which seemed to suggest that the ordinances of the scriptures were binding on

all people aspiring for emancipation, it is natural for Arjuna to ask the question which opens this Chapter.

Whether the ordinances of the scriptures here cover Upanishadic and philosophical aspects has been already settled in VII, 20, and more pointedly in IX, 23, where it is stated that those who worship other gods and even go to the extent of doing so without conforming to the requirements of the scriptures, are not excluded from the path of the Absolute as envisaged in those philosophic Chapters.

Here, however, it is no more a philosophic question to be decided. The Vedas, at least in the *brāhmana* portion, are full of taboos and obligatory injunctions in connection with what is permissible or not in sacrifices, recitations, etc. The Vedas belong to the context of the *Pūrva Mimāmsā* (Critique of Ritual) and are well known to be different from Vedānta which is based on *artha-vāda* (free philosophical criticism and exegesis) while the Vedas are based on *viddhi nisheda* (injunctions and prohibitions). The reference here to *sāstra viddhi* (scriptural obligations) cannot therefore be to Vedānta.

It is the changing *purusha* (spirit, person) of Chapter XV who is affected by the three *gunas* (modalities of nature). Arjuna's question refers to these modalities. From this we can legitimately deduce that the *sāstra* here meant is the Vedas. Thus it is to a very limited and relativist field that Arjuna's question applies and the answer also should be understood as limited to actual religious practices seen in this world, and not to spirituality in general.

Sribhagavān uvācha

[2] *trividhā bhavati sraddhā*
dehinām sā svabhāvajā
sāttvikī rājasī chai 'va
tāmasī cha 'ti tām srinu

Krishna said:
The faith of the embodied is of three kinds, born of their proper nature; the pure-clear (*sattva*), the affective-active (*rajas*), and the inert-dark (*tamas*). About it hear:

The leading nature of Arjuna's question becomes evident here, by which we see that this verse explains the title.

[3] *sattva nurupa sarvasya*
sraddha bhavati bharata
sraddhamayo yam purusho
yo yachchhraddhah sa eva sah

Shaped according to one s true nature the faith of everyone happens to be O Bharata (Arjuna) man is made of his faith of what faith a man is even that he is

Here the dialectical counterparts we have so often spoken about are exposed in clear relief Faith is equated to the inner or true nature of a man Faith on the objective side is the counterpart of his true nature which is subjective

When it is stated here that a man cons sts of his faith there is an equation of these counterparts Shakespeare s saying that apparel oft proclaims the man states the same type of verity in somewhat the same dialectical form A tree is known by its fruit its true nature depends on its counterpart the fruit

We have said that faith refers to an outward expression of tendencies resulting in a pattern of behaviour which is overtly visible The overt nature of the values to be discussed in this and the greater part of the next Chapter is already evident in the value called faith here

The phrase *sattvanurupa* (shaped according to one s own nature) has the term *sattva* (true existent) in it which is employed in a sense particular in this context and not as merely one of the modalities of nature A man holds a form of faith dear to him because it corresponds with a subtle and essential aspect of his own nature This may be called his true nature as distinguished from a nature pretended or artificially worn The term *sattva* here has some affinity with the word *satya* (truth) That aspect of the ego which is transparent to truth may be said to be what is meant here

[4] *yajante sattvika devan*
yaksharakshamsi rajasah
pretan bhutaganams cha nye
yajante tamasa janah

Pure clear (*sattvik*) men worship the divinities active passionate (*rajasik*) the gods of eating and wealth (*yakshas*) and the gods of ferocity and violence

(*rakshasas*), the others, the inert dark (*tamasik*) the spirits of the dead (*pretas*) and the hosts of elemental beings (*bhutas*)

The diagnosis of the varieties of worship which come under faith is first stated here for general guidance. When it is said that *sattvika* (pure-clear modality) men worship the *devas* (divinities) the converse is more true We can recognize from their worship of the divinities that they are pure types They conform to the pure-clear types in accordance with the modalities of nature of Chapter xiv In every verse below the statements with their converse propositions are meant for purposes of diagnosis It does not mean that by purposely worshipping the gods taking this diagnosis as an injunction, that such a worshipper turns out to be pure merely by that simple fact This absurdity will be more striking when applied to food

Food is much talked of by persons who are inclined to think of taboos and bans as even Sankara tends to view these indications A man who by nature likes pungent food, just by switching over to an oily bland kind of food which is here called *sattvika* (pure-clear) in verse 8, by that simple artificial change, could then legitimately claim to become a *sattvika* (pure-clear) type of person

The indications in this Chapter are to be used for diagnostic purposes only, although it must be added that trying to conform uniformly to the higher standard meant in this Chapter need not be ruled out as futile But holding on to single items would be fetishism or idolatry, which can only be called *tamasik* (inert-dark) as stated in verse 22 later

Those who worship the *devas* (divinities) resemble the Vedic worshippers who may be said to tread the *devayana* (divine path) At the other extreme we have those who may be called by contrast *pitriyanis* (ancestral worshippers) They are likely to be steeped in negative or regretful states of mind implied in a retrospective spirit when thinking of forefathers The word *preta* (spirit of the dead) indicates this. What is stated here corresponds to what has already been stated in ix, 25 In the middle position the *rajasik* (affective active) natures and the worship of the *rakshasas* (fierce demons) form natural counterparts the former subjective and the latter objective, representing active, passionate values Each attracts or repels the other

We see that diagnosis as employed in this Chapter not only helps to determine objectively a type of faith, but also the type of person who corresponds to the faith A double diagnosis is thus accomplished in these verses It would be too much to enter into all their implications

[5] *asastravihitam ghoram*
tapyante ye tapo janah
dambhahamkara samyuktah
kama raga balan vitah

[6] *karsayantah sarirastham*
bhutagramam achetasah
mam chai va ntahsarirastham
tan viddhy asuranischayan

Those men who practise terrible austerities not en joined by the scripture given to hypocrisy and ego-ism, lust, passion and power,

torturing all the organs of the body and (harassing) Me seated in the body, know them to be of demonic resolves

By the strong tone employed here these verses condemn a certain severe type of *tapas* (austerity, self discipline) Self-torture, self immolation, sleeping on nails, fasting and such other forms of popular austerity with which historic India was replete, often did not have any philosophical or psychological validity Such irrational and spurious forms of spirituality, lacking any *raison d etre* are condemned here

When the question of Arjuna itself referred to those who discard scriptural injunctions it was not strictly necessary to mention the matter again or to condemn spiritual expressions of this type in such downright language The complaint is that God, living in the body of such men, is himself tortured This can only apply to the relativist *purusha* (person spirit) and then only through the *gunas* (modalities of nature) for it is indicated in IV 14 that the spirit is left untouched by any possible taint coming from nature An indirect relation with such modalities of nature is however implied in VII 12 where it is stated that the spirit is not in the *gunas* (modalities of nature) but that they are in the spirit How a thing which is

not outside can still hurt a spirit is problematic, but we have noticed in Chapter xv that a certain mystery was still left regarding psycho physical interaction which, as we have said, depended on a form of occasionalism It is therefore admissible in principle that spirit itself suffers from the tortures of wrong austerities, because the more objectively the problem is discussed, the Absolute implied in such a discussion has also by necessity to become correspondingly objectively conceived Such, as we have said, is the scheme according to which these Chapters are written

Further, this type of austerity would come under pretension, because it belongs neither to the person s own nature nor to scriptural indications It is this type of absurdity which is referred to as *para dharma* (alien pattern of behaviour) in III, 35 and repeated in XVIII, 47 and 48 the close examination of which we shall reserve for the next Chapter

Notice that the triple elements of evil of XVI 21, are included, with egoism and strength added on, in connection with these types The egoistic tendencies mentioned in different Chapters tend to converge together more objectively here *Balam* (power or strength) is reminiscent of the mailed fist, though here it is only austerity which is the subject and not politics The tortures of the Inquisition may be thought of as coming under such power employed in the name of faith although the context is somewhat different as belonging to history

Note Some have taken the compound *kama raga balan vitah* (of lust passion and power) as *tritiya tat purusha* (*i e*, with the first two members of the compound having an independent status) but we agree with Sankara in giving an independent status to the word *balam* (power) as also to the words *kama* (lust) and *raga* (passion)

The term *karsayantah* (harassing) means disturbing rather than direct torture and applies more to the *bhutagramam* (all the organs of the body) This distinction has been retained as far as possible in our translation in keeping with our comments The language of the author does not give room strictly to any deviation from his previous theory of psycho physical relationship

[7] *aharas tv api sarvasya*
trividho bhavati priyah
yajnas tapas tatha danam
tesham bhedam imam srinu

> Even the food which is dear to everyone is of three kinds, as also the sacrifices austerities and gifts Hear you of the distinction between them

Each temperament has its corresponding food As we can tell the character of a person by the company he keeps or by his dress it is possible to distinguish different temperaments on the basis of the kind of food each prefers

The words *priyah* (dear) here or *ishta* (liked) in verse 9 refer to this preference by which the corresponding temperament is to be ascertained

[8] *ayuhsattvabalarogya*
sukhapritivivardhanah
rasyah snigdhah sthira hridya
aharah sattvikapriyah

> The foods which promote life vitality strength, health joy and cheerfulness and which are (in them selves) tasty rich substantial and appealing are dear to the pure clear (*sattvik*) types

The kind of food preferred by pure clear types is what prolongs life or vitality when looked upon from the standpoint of its effect In itself the food mentioned is tasty rich sub stantial and appealing These qualities of food can exist only when a person has the right attitude towards food in general A gourmandiser interested in stuffing himself does not really enjoy food in the sense of the last epithet Only a clear minded refined person capable of enjoying a good dinner as it ought to be enjoyed can choose such items that have good effects and enjoy them properly Some have made the mistake of translating *sn gdhah* (rich) as meaning bland or tasteless Such a meaning would only indicate a dietetic fad

[9] *katvamlalavanatyushna*
tikshnarukshav dahinah
ahara rajasasye shta
duhkhasokamayapradah

> Foods that are strongly flavoured sour saline ex cessively hot pungent hardened and burning are

liked by the active-passionate (*rajasik*) and are producers of pain, unhappiness and indisposition

Active people like certain foods selected not on the basis of their good effects but mainly on the basis of pampering to ordinary taste Such foods might have bad effects about which they do not care These can be pain unhappiness and indisposition as mentioned here

Coming to the foods themselves, *katu* (strongly flavoured) which is the first quality mentioned often mistakenly translated bitter refers rather to the biting flavours of foods like chillies, garlic and ginger The other items are gradations of the same category all of them being stimulating to the palate The eater here does not take account of their evil consequences to himself This is the distinguishing feature of the *rajasik* (active passionate) type

[10] *yatayamam gatarasam*
puti paryushitam cha yat
uchchhishtham api cha medhyam
bhojanam tamasapriyam

That which is left over which has lost its taste which is putrid stale which is refuse and unfit for consumption such alimentary items are welcome to the inert dark (*tamasik*) types

Here there is no choice on the part of the eater The items are conditioned by necessity and it would be wrong therefore to take the expression *priyah* (dear) too literally All the items are distinguished by being *bhojana* i (general alimentary items food of some sort or another) The term *amedhyam* (unfit to be eaten) suggests all items which have to be eaten by force of necessity only though without virtue in themselves because of taste etc or because of desirable after effects They might even verge on what is poisonous Stray dogs are seen to have no choice in food and stray humans likewise To call them as consciously conforming to any type would be a travesty of truth By long conditioning it is perhaps possible to find persons who *prefer* stale or putrid food when they could have a better choice

[11] *aphalākankshibhir yajno*
vidhidrishto ya ijyate

yashtavyam eve 'ti manah
samadhaya sa sattvikah

> That sacrifice is pure clear (*sattvik*) which is offered by those desiring no gain, having injunctional recognition on the mind being tranquilized by (their saying to themselves) sacrifice is necessary

Three kinds of sacrifices are mentioned in this and the two verses that follow The main distinction between good and bad sacrifices lies in the fact that while the good does not have immediate results in view, the bad is definitely prompted by gain-motive

The *tamasik* (inert dark) kind is devoid of value in itself because it is not based on any recognized indications in scripture, and also because beneficial items like distribution of food or recitation of exalting spiritual texts are absent Such sacrifices have to be counted as meaningless or without value The persons who perform such sacrifices are unable to think in any rational way and are blind people led by other blind people whom they imitate

All the three conditions mentioned here may not be violated in any particular instance When it is so violated the whole sacrifice has to be considered absurd, not only as being ineffective spiritually, but as being useless in the more ordinary sense of the term

In verse 11 we should imagine a person who, because he is a rationalist or a philosopher, tends to minimize the importance of ritualistic sacrifices altogether He does not desire heaven as a result of sacrifice He is capable of doing without sacrifice for his own sake, but he resorts to it after giving due thought, as implied in *samadhaya* (having come to decision), saying to himself that sacrifice is necessary and will do some good, though not to himself directly but by inducing a favourite atmosphere generally in his life, or even to set a good example to those who may be addicted to absurd behaviour The various arguments that can pass through the mind of such a man are implied in II 20 to 29 In short he feels the urge for such sacrifice both on the grounds of his own type of philosophy and by common necessity Although the philosophy of such a man may not reach transcendental heights it constitutes the counterpart of necessary action as he is able to understand it Such an interpretation becomes admissible in the light of

LL 17 The word *yashtavyam* (must sacrifice) here corresponds to *datavyam* (must give) of verse 20 Both have a moral, imperative character

[12] *abhisamdhaya tu phalam*
dambhartham api chai 'va yat
ijyate bharatasreshtha
tam yajnam viddhi rajasam

That (sacrifice) which is offered with expectation of return, or for egoistic show, know, O Best of Bharatas, (Arjuna) that sacrifice to be active passionate (*rajasik*)

Usurers lend money in the hope of a larger return The good Samaritan on the other hand has no such thought The usurer approximates to the *rajasik* (active passionate) type here What is more, the sacrifice is ostentatious

[13] *vidhihinam asrishtannam*
mantrahinam adakshinam
sraddhavirahitam yajnam
tamasam parichakshate

The sacrifice which does not conform to scriptural rules, without food distribution without sacred chants and token gift meant for the *Guru* and devoid of faith, they declare to be inert dark (*tamasik*)

How the *tamasik* (inert dark) type of sacrifice can be wholly or partially absurd has been already explained under verse 11 From Sankara s comment on this verse he states that the gift here is meant for priests and the food distribution should be for brahmins It is clear he is thinking of a non brahmin sacrifice in the usual context of orthodoxy in India which as we have said he connives at. If we understand the Gita teach ing as belonging to the world generally, Sankara s remarks sound somewhat parochial and out of date

[14] *deva dvija guru prajna*
pujanam saucham arjavam
brahmacharyam ahimsa cha
sariram tapa uchyate

Worship offered to the gods, to wisdom initiates, (*dvijas*), to spiritual teachers (*gurus*) and the wise (generally), cleanliness, straightforwardness, the chaste ways of a wisdom novice, non-hurting, are said to constitute austerity of the body.

[15] *anudvegakaram vakyam*
satyam priyahitam cha yat
svadhyayabhyasanam chai 'va
vanmayam tapa uchyate

Inoffensive speech, which is truthful, pleasant and beneficial, contemplative self study, are named the austerity of speech

[16] *manahprasadah saumyatvam*
maunam atmavinigrahah
bhavasamsuddhir ity etat
tapo manasam uchyate

Mental happiness, gentleness, silence, self restraint, an imagination of creative transparency, are named the austerity of the mind

[17] *sraddhaya parayā taptam*
tapas tat trividham naraih
aphalakankshibhir yuktaih
sattvikam parichakshate

This threefold austerity, practised with transcendent faith by unitively balanced men without desire of gain, is named pure clear (*sattvik*)

[18] *satkaramanapujartham*
tapo dambhena chai 'va yat
kriyate tad iha proktam
rajasam chalam adhruvam

That austerity which is practised for gaining respect, honour, reverence and for the sake of show, is named active passionate (*rajasik*), changeful and insecure

[19] *mudhagrahena 'tmano yat*
pidaya kriyate tapah
parasyo 'tsadanartham va
tat tamasam udahritam

That austerity which is practised out of foolish obstinacy, with self torture or for the detriment of another, is named inert dark (*tamasik*)

These verses, 14 to 19 form a section on *tapas* (austerity) In the first three verses of this section, self discipline with body, speech and mind are described In the three verses that follow, body, speech and mind are taken together and distinguished as belonging to modality types The guiding principles in all these verses have been mentioned already in speaking of sacrifices, and they require no further comment

[20] *datavyam iti yad danam*
diyate 'nupakarine
dese kale cha patre cha
tad danam sattvikam smritam

That gift which (clearly) ought to be made, given to one from whom no return is expected, in (the right) place and time and to a deserving person, that gift is pure clear (*sattvik*)

The next three verses deal with gifts pertaining to the three faith types In the pure type of verse 20 we find as before that there is due deliberation and choice involved It is not haphazard but reasonably arrived at The need for it must first be sufficiently clear to the donor Next the person who gets it must be considered whether he will benefit by the gift or whether it will hurt him Then there are considerations about place and time A gift made to a prodigal son when his prodigality was on the increase would not be so effective as when made on his return Then the good Samaritan touch is there in the phrase *anupakarine* (one from whom no return is expected).

[21] *yat tu pratyupakarartham*
phalam uddisya va punah
diyate cha pariklishtam
tad danam rajasam smritam

And what is given with a view to return benefit, or with gain in view, reluctantly, that gift is held to be active passionate (*rajasik*)

The term *pariklishtam* (reluctantly) suggests that the giver is undecided and also that he would still like to keep the gift himself This wavering quality indicates the active passionate type

[22] *adesakale yad danam*
apatrebhyas cha diyate
asatkritam avajnatam
tat tamasam udahritam

The gift that is given at a wrong place or time disdainfully and patronizingly to persons unfit to receive it, affords an example of the inert dark (*tamasik*)

Promiscuous gift making into which no study of the situation enters and gifts made disdainfully and patronizingly ignoring the suitability of place and occasion is described here Most of the charities of a public character come under this category, as for example in India where rich people give doles to assembled beggars who are often seen quarrelling and fighting among themselves before receiving a pittance

[23] *aum tat sad iti nirdeso*
brahmanas trividhah smritah
brahmanas tena vedas cha
yajnas cha vihitah pura

Aum tat sat (Absolute Word That is Real) thus has been known in the past as designating the Absolute The scriptures (called) *Brahmanas* the Vedas and sacrifices also by this were prescribed of old

Having referred to three types of faith corresponding to the three kinds of persons who adopt such faiths it is still not clear whether the Gita is orthodox or heterodox Arjuna s question was expressly put to get a definite answer to this The only apparently definite or strong answer so far given is contained in verses 5 and 6 where a man of *asuric* (demonic) nature is

roundly condemned for aspiring to perform austerities Such a man resembles a *Sudra Muni* (proletarian sage) like Sham buka, who was killed by Rama, or like Ravana of the *Ramayana* who was also noted for his wilful austerities The Upanishads contain the spirituality which revalued such early forms of popular spirituality in the light of which this strong condemnation could be historically understood

This last section of the present Chapter attempts a supreme synthesis of faith values implied in Veda and Vedanta together The author does not wish in the next Chapter to limit himself to values belonging strictly to the domain of relativity and into which the three modalities of nature infuse their own particular coloration Abandoning therefore the frame of reference hitherto used, the author now in the present verse resorts to a scheme of correlation of values which would bridge and extend beyond relativistic or Vedic values both downwards into the field of necessity and upwards into the contingent.

The *maha vakya* (Great Utterance contemplative philosophical formula) *Aum tat sat* (Absolute Word Logos—That—which is Real, Good, Existent) which is respected both by the Vedists and the Vedantins is chosen to afford a formula around which such a correlation of values could most easily and simply be effected

Wisdom values of a transcendental order and of an idealistic nature are related to the syllable *Aum* (Logos or Word) In the word *tat* (That) practical ontological values of everyday life are included so as to fall under the category of the eternal *Sat* (the Real, Good or Existent) refers to the existential, necessary and immanent aspects of reality From this value represented by *Aum* (the Word) to the value represented by *Sat* (Real, Existent) we can imagine a scale of values extending from those belonging to the remotest past to those pertaining to the furthest future where the goal of destiny of man lies Eternity is therefore comprised within the amplitude of these three words and all gradations of values can be fitted into this scale which reaches from earth to heaven like a ladder as in Jacob s vision

The *Brahmanas* represent elaborated Vedic injunctions arising out of Vedic worship The sacrifices themselves which are forms of worship normal to the Vedas consist of ritualistic actions The three values *Brahmanas*, Vedas and sacrifices, themselves represent three rungs as it were of this golden ladder of values The scope of this Chapter being limited to values

lying within the subject of faith or religion or type of religionist, these three levels of value of the Vedic context are for the present referred to first in verse 23

All ritualistic values irrespective of these three levels, it is said here, could be related to their corresponding syllables in the sacred formula given here It is at the same time a *mahavakya* (formula or Great Utterance) of the Vedānta, thus enjoying a sacred status even in the eyes of the orthodox, at least on a level with the Vedic *Gayatri* (sacred verse repeated by brahmins at their morning and evening devotions) which perhaps marks the highest point as a sacred formula within the relativist framework of Vedic spiritual life

By resorting to this contemplative formula *Aum tat sat*, the author has succeeded in lifting the values of spirituality almost out of their nature-modality limitations which pertain to the changing aspect of the Absolute, and has thus prepared the way for a full dress discussion of spiritual values cleared of this particular scaffolding

[24] *tasmād aum ity udahritya*
yajna dana tapah kriyah
pravartante vidhanoktah
satatam brahmavadinam

Therefore uttering *Aum* (Absolute Word), sacrifice, giving, austerity and action enjoined by scriptural ordinance always begin for those who represent the doctrine of the Absolute

The reference to *brahmavadinah* (those representing the doctrine of the Absolute) shows that the Absolute itself could be the ultimate value for both the relativist Veda-religionist as well as more properly to the Vedāntin

Aum (the Word, Logos, Absolute) as representing the knowledge or wisdom of the Absolute, which itself is a supreme value, is the first word to be uttered as laid down in scripture even for necessary ritual within the scope of the Vedas It thus forms a common value link between both Veda and Vedanta Only knowers of the Absolute use the *Aum* in the manner as stated here Others might not realize such a significance.

[25] *tad ity anabhisamdhaya*
phalam yajnatapahkriyah

danakriyas cha vividhah
kriyante mokshakankshibhih

With *tat* (That) excluding all values of gain acts of sacrifice and austerity, as also acts of giving of various kinds are performed by those who desire liberation

The expression *mokshakankshibhih* (those who desire liberation) indicates those who are one degree inferior to those who understand the doctrine of the Absolute in terms of wisdom, of the last verse

Liberation implies the recognition of necessity The *tat* (That) in referring to such a value as liberation is described here as being exclusive of all other lesser values such as lust, etc spoken of earlier which are related to the active passionate modality of nature (*rajas guna*) When lesser values are thus excluded the value of *tat* is the same as the value of *Aum* of the previous verse

[26] *sadbhave sadhubhave cha*
sad ity etat prayujyate
prasaste karmani tatha
sacl chhabdah partha yujyate

This (term) *sat* (the Real) is used in the sense of existence and of goodness and likewise O Partha (Arjuna) to all laudable actions the expression *sat* is usually applied

This verse accomplishes the equation of the notion of existence with the notion of value Value can belong to something which is good whether abstract or concrete entities are concerned or values can be implicit in actions which are beneficial and in keeping with truth or conforming to the Absolute value of *Aum* (the Word) itself In terms of value the connotation of the three syllables tend to unite

[27] *yajne tapasi dane cha*
sthitih sad iti cho chyate
karma chai va tadarthiyam
sad ity eva bh dhiyate

Steady loyalty in sacrifice, austerity and giving is also called *sat* (good and existing) and so also action so intended is called *sat*

Constancy or continued affiliation to what constitutes the faith value of sacrifice, austerity and gift bestowing, which are the three items dealt with in this Chapter, is itself a spiritual value The man who is thus steady and loyal to the outward values, represents in himself a certain high value Conversely, if we should swing to the objective side of the situation implied in an act of faith, inasmuch as all these acts refer to the value of the Absolute through what is connoted by the word *tat* (That), the status of the crude actions themselves can in principle be equated to the Absolute itself, and thus become both existent and good, as stated in the last verse

Thus the four rungs of the ladder of values the lowest referring to action, the next to existence and goodness at once, the one following which is the passionless goal of liberation, and the fourth and highest which consists of the pure wisdom value of the Absolute as the Word *Aum* are seen as a ladder series each enjoying an equal status vertically

The crudest form of this outward necessary aspect of spirituality is seen in the context of warfare, from which back ground the Gita discussion emerged and to which it returns in XVIII, 59 and 60 The next Chapter has to deal in the meantime with the question of how action can be renounced or, if accepted as an inevitable or necessary factor in life how the yogi harmonizes it with high values of wisdom on the one hand and on the other hand with deep seated factors of necessity which are equally eternal

From an ontological discussion of values we pass on in the next Chapter, to a teleological discussion centering around action as a key word Necessary action alone brings us finally to the scene of warfare fitting philosophy correctly into the context of inevitability in life

[28] *asraddhaya hutam dattam*
tapas taptam krita n cha yat
asad ity uchyate partha
na cha tat pretya no iha

Whatever is sacrificed given or done and whatever austerity is gone through without faith it is called

asat (non-existent, no good), O Pārtha (Arjuna); it has no value here or hereafter.

Sraddhā (faith), in this verse, can be dependent or independent of scriptural injunctions. What is more, it can belong at once to Vedism or to the higher way of the Upanishads. It is a factor which affiliates the individual with whatever is valuable in spiritual life. Without establishing a relation of the kind implied in the word faith, all outward observances or expressions in the name of spirituality are absurd or meaningless. They have no place in a real scheme of existence and they have no value in any properly understood scale of values. This verse says that such a false front of *sraddhā* (faith) can make no sense.

ity srimad bhagavadgitāsūpanishatsu brahmavidyāyām
yogasāstre srikrishnārjunasamvāde
sraddhātrayavibhāgayogo nāma saptadaso 'dhyāyah

Thus ends in the Upanishads of the Songs of God, in the Science of the Wisdom of the Absolute, in the Dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, the Seventeenth Chapter entitled The Unitive Recognition of the Three Patterns of Faith.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE UNITIVE WAY IN BEHAVIOUR PATTERNS

Samnyasayoga

THIS final important Chapter has the task of gathering up loose-ends of the discussion from various Chapters especially Chapter III on *Karma Yoga* (Action Transcended Unitively)

Karma (action) was decried as very inferior in II, 49, and the status of intelligence was unequivocally praised In saying so, the superiority of wisdom was extolled, as in IV, 33 The possibility of a spiritual man attaining to freedom from action was prominently emphasized in III, 17 Even in the context of war it was said in XI, 33, that Arjuna had no initiative to take at all based on any reasoning He was only an occasional or incidental factor in the general situation Even as early as II, 12, there is a sweeping philosophical generalization which, if accepted would make no action necessary

This Chapter however, if it has any manifest unity at all in its construction, must have it in its centering around necessary action Various types of action and actors not covered in previous Chapters constitute the distinguishing subject matter of this Chapter In fact we find here that action itself is glorified and held to be a value worthy of inclusion under contemplation

Action has to be unitively understood in the context of wisdom In other words, wisdom values have to infuse, regulate and modify necessary action in such a way that the sublimation of the spirit of the actor may take place They may thus help to lead him in his spiritual progress from the lowest of levels in which he is caught in confusion and necessity, up to the clear heights of a wisdom which is both pure and practical The height of wisdom itself need not necessarily be considered to fall outside the scope of thought as an activity which the actor is capable of In other words thought itself could be included in the highest values belonging to the context of action and inseparable from the actor

We have noticed how, in the immediately preceding Chapters, more and more positive, objective and overt aspects of life were successively treated as the counterparts of the contemplative implied in the Gita Faith as an outward value to which individuals may be attached, was discussed in Chapter xvii In the present Chapter we take one step more in the same direction of objectivity and the overtness of the value implied which is here action as a counterpart of the actor Action does not refer to items of activity but to action that conforms to certain patterns of behaviour

What gives unity to the present Chapter, therefore, is this notion of action conceived globally as consisting of types or patterns of behaviour on the part of the actor who in turn is the contemplative aspirant of the Gita Action thus conceived includes such items as thought, opinion and philosophy itself A man s ideas about life can regulate his behaviour, while the pattern of behaviour he consciously adopts can have repercussions on his thought In this way action or *karma* in its modified or extended sense becomes a counterpart of the actor The same truth can be stated in terms of knowledge It could have the knower instead of the actor, and between what is knowable and the knower, an interplay of relationship is possible, resulting in the supreme absolutist value called knowledge or wisdom The delicate methodological and epistemological considerations entering into the discussion here have to be carefully noticed

In verse 20 of this Chapter there is reference to *sattvik* or pure knowledge Again in verse 30 there is reference to *sattvik* or pure reason as a form of thought functioning What such a thought accomplishes is to distinguish between ambivalent values such as bondage and liberation From these instances it would be clear that action as intended in this Chapter has a very extended, generalized and global sense Knowledge results from the interaction of the knower and the knowable as implied in the first line of verse 18 However, in the second line of the same verse it is implied that action and actor are counterparts where the faculties of the mind are involved These two sets of triple factors are seen re arranged in a slightly different way in the very next verse, 19 Action and actor are the counterparts now and knowledge takes the place of the emergent value implied between them Arjuna being a contemplative aspirant for wisdom in the field of battle, we can think also of fighter, battle and absolute victory as

the triple factors involved in the Chapter, after the same pattern as the two triple sets mentioned in verses 18 and 19

A careful reading of verses 18 and 19 reveals what at first sight seems an unwarranted interposing of actual factors for those belonging to the perceptual The triple set of verse 19 which consists of knowledge, action and actor is derived from the two distinct sets of the previous verse, the former of which belongs to the perceptual (*kshetrajna*) order while the latter belongs to the actual (*kshetra*) When we notice that both actual and perceptual were brought progressively closer and more unitively together even in the previous Chapter (XVII) it is easy to concede that in this next and final Chapter the author has the express intention of synthesizing as completely as possible, so that the requirements of theoretical knowledge and the actualities of the battlefield may come under one inclusive view with a revalued notion of the Absolute

The internal structure of this Chapter has other incompatibilities which however on closer examination also become justifiable We find that the Chapter starts with a very definite doubt in regard to the difference between *samnyasa* (renunciation) and *tyaga* (relinquishment of benefit motivation in active life) Renunciation is a pattern of behaviour belonging to the contemplative context of spirituality based on a rationalistic and anti ritualistic outlook *Tyaga* (relinquishment) is the revised version of the same as recommended in the Gita (V, 4) by which only benefit motivation in action is to be avoided, actions as such being held permissible and even necessary in normal life That some sort of action is inevitable to a living being is clearly laid down in verse 11

Besides *samnyasa* (renunciation) as a global or unitive form of action, belonging to a contemplative pattern of behaviour, there are various other patterns of behaviour equally important for the contemplative to understand in the revised light of the epistemology and methodology of the Gita This epistemology is discussed in detail between verses 13 and 19 After this has been done the Chapter passes in review various forms of contemplative behaviour under sacrifice gift austerity and under knowledge action and actor Bravery and happiness are derivative virtues or values of the action context which are also discussed before the types of actor such as the brahmin, *kshattriya*, *vaisya* and *sudra* are discussed in the Gita (and by no means the same as these signify in the code of Manu for example)

We have pointed out earlier that the latter half of the Gita has the purpose of referring to the personality of Arjuna in the actual battlefield, not as a mere philosophical abstraction, but with all his actual peculiarities as when one would distinguish a Peter from a Paul This task has been progressively accomplished from the beginning of Chapter xiv The necessary basis of absolutist life was discussed there in relation to nature and its three modalities Positive and negative values were made clear by the end of Chapter xvi after effecting a synthesis in the Paramount Person of Chapter xv. In Chapter xvii types of faith as a counterpart of the faithful aspirant to wisdom were synthetically reviewed and subjected to revaluation With the discussion of bravery and happiness as forming the value counterparts of an active contemplative, the Gita now comes finally to close grips with the actualities of the situation Arjuna is threatened with spiritual destruction in verse 58 He has to do or die Such is the imperative nature implicit in the situation The philosophy of obligation and necessity is preached to Arjuna only till the end of verse 62 where he is allowed to act as he likes The style becomes contemplative again after this verse and retains the tone in which the Gita has been conceived as a whole In verse 66 Arjuna is asked to abandon altogether all obligatory duties, in unequivocal language Without suffering a whit in the apodeictic realism of outlook, the Gita comes to the culminating final verse in which values such as justice and fair play are referred to, in verse 78, as belonging to the contemplative context.

As *karma* (action) has a character of inevitability, nobody, according to this Chapter, can be called a true *samnyasin* (total renouncer) The possibility of an exception to this rule by which all beings are committed to some act or other is, on the whole discountenanced, although such a possibility has been given sufficient recognition in other Chapters. For example, iii, 17 iv, 20 and v, 8 mention the possibility of keeping aloof from action Only in verse 49 of the present Chapter is there a passing reference to a *samnyasin* (renouncer) and that merely as a possible ideal to be reached.

As far as this Chapter is concerned, therefore, it would not be wrong to generalize by saying that it tends to discredit *samnyasa* (renunciation) in favour of *tyaga* (relinquishment) In verse 6 of this Chapter this decisive opinion is expressly stated by Krishna According to the same verse, *karma phala* (the fruit

or result of action) is to be given up by the actor by unitive treatment of ends and means

There is again in verse 12 a very subtle contrast implied as between the *samnyāsin* (renouncer) and the *tyagi* (relinquisher). Between the terms *samnyasin* (renouncer), yogi (person of unitive understanding) and *tyagi* (relinquisher of benefit-motivation) we have to steer clear of many implied connotations or old meanings which would naturally attach to them before we can grasp the pure method of transcending action recommended by the Gita The theory of unitively transcending action is stated in verses 14, 15 and 16 later

The difference between Samkhya (rationalist philosophy) and Yoga (unitive philosophy) has already been completely demolished in v, 5 Samkhya is primarily a heterodox rationalist school based on the twenty-five *tattvas* (principles) dualistically understood, but in spite of its heterodox dualism, there is a close and avowed adherence to the Samkhya in verse 13 later. The revaluation of types of behaviour or action in this Chapter enters into subtle shades of values relating to diet at one end and to well-being at the other It is little wonder, therefore, that the Chapter has been described in xviii, 63 as " more secret than all else that is secret " and again in next verse as " most secret of all ".

Spirituality usually understood tends to be a form of escapism which often fails to meet squarely the crude or brute facts of a situation. If escapism is not to vitiate the conduct of a wise man, the factor called necessity which inevitably enters into wisdom, when such a life of wisdom has to be lived in its fullest sense, has to be put on an equal level with the contingent factor. It is not enough, as Arjuna indicates in xi, 1, that his intellectual confusion should have gone but, as he himself indicates again in verse 73 at the end of this Chapter, it is necessary that he should have also regained the normal balance of his personality or proper identity through strengthening of memory By the end of the Gita we have not only a wise Arjuna but one who has fully come to himself by pure and practical wisdom

Taking away what is implied in Arjuna's first statement from what is implied in the second, we get a rough idea of what the author has in mind here It is something to be made clear to Arjuna in the discussion between Chapter xi and the end of the Gita here in this last Chapter Arjuna has to become completely aware of the full inevitable implications of the

situation in which he finds himself, together with a proper understanding of his own nature with all its specific modalities and determining factors, before he can consent to obey Krishna, as he says he is willing to do, in XVIII, 73.

An actual man in an actual situation is not merely an entity belonging to philosophy, but one who is called upon to act or lead a life without trying to live in a vacuum, which would be both absurd and impossible. These are some of the subtleties of this last Chapter, the "secrets" of verse 63.

But "the most secret of all" of verse 64 relieves even this tension in the name of subtlety and makes us breathe again the calm atmosphere of a treatise on the contemplative life in relation with the Absolute.

Thus reaching its climax as part of an epic poem, the Gita makes allusion to the four castes, and seems to lend its support to the fourfold division. Before closing these introductory remarks it would be wrong to omit to point out that the reference to this sociological subject deserves some careful scrutiny, in order to fit it properly into the context of contemplation, and to understand that those aspects of caste actually mentioned here, or popularly supposed to be implied here, and which cannot be so fitted, should be relegated to the historical background, the sociology or politics proper, and to be best discussed outside the scope of the present work on contemplation.

The Gita is a contemplative picture painted on a historico-epic canvas. What belongs properly to such a historic canvas should not be mistaken for the true contemplative teaching. Such teaching should be given its own place and importance if the Gita is to have its rightful value as a treatise on contemplation and yoga.

Arjuna uvācha

[1] *samnyāsasya mahābāho*
tattvam ichchhāmi veditum
tyāgasya cha hrishikesa
prithak kesinishūdana

Arjuna said:
I desire to know, O Mighty-Armed (Krishna), the truth of renunciation (*samnyāsa*) as also of relinquishment (*tyāga*), O Hrishikesa (Krishna), each distinctly, O Kesinishūdana (Krishna).

Sribhagavan uvacha

[2] *kamyanam karmanam nyasam*
samnyasam kavayo viduh
sarvakarmaphala tyagam
prahus tyagam vichakshanah

Krishna said
Bards of old understand by renunciation (*samnyasa*) the renunciation of desire prompted action, the relinquishing of the benefit of all actions those with insight declare to be relinquishment (*tyaga*)

These two verses do not call for any further comment

[3] *tyajyam doshavad ity eke*
karma prahur manishinah
yajna dana tapah karma
na tyajyam iti cha pare

'Action should be given up as an evil declare some rationalists others say that 'act of sacrifice, giving and austerity should not be abandoned'

The two classes referred to here represent the heterodox Samkhyas (rationalist philosophers) who, like Kapila, its reputed founder, were known to be against Vedic ritual and those like Jaimini who in his *Purva Mimamsa Darsana* (Inquiry into the Prior or Ritualist Section of the Vedas as a Philosophic Vision), gave a critically examined form to Vedic ritualism

[4] *nischayam srinu me tatra*
tyage bharatasattama
tyago hi purushavyaghra
trividhah samprakirtitah

[5] *yajna dana tapah karma*
na tyajyam karyam eva tat
yajno danam tapas chai va
pavanani manishinam

[6] *etany api tu karmani*
sangam tyaktva phalani cha

kartavyani 'ti me partha
nischitam matam uttamam

Hear now from Me, O Best of the Bharatas (Arjuna), the settled conclusion about relinquishment (*tyaga*), (which) relinquishment indeed, O Best of Men (Arjuna), has been well known as of three kinds

the act of sacrifice, gift and austerity should not be relinquished, each should indeed be observed, sacrifice, gift and austerity are the purifiers of rational men,

but even these actions should be done leaving out attachment and desire for result, this, O Partha (Arjuna), is My decided and best conviction

These three verses must go together because the term *nischayam* (settled conclusion) of verse 4 refers to verse 5, while verse 6 concludes the whole statement The reference to three kinds of *tyaga* (relinquishment) in verse 4 can mean three classes conceived on the lines of the *gunas* (modalities of nature) as expressed in verses 8 and 9, or as Ramanuja suggests, can mean (1) relinquishment of result, (2) of agency and (3) of not thinking of agency at all, but attributing it to the Absolute

[7] *niyatasya tu samnyasah*
karmano no 'papadyate
mohât tasya parityagas
tamasah parikirtitah

Verily the renunciation of necessary inevitable, action does not arise, the renunciation of such through delusion is said to be inert dark (*tamasik*)

The word *samnyasa* (renunciation) is used here in its original conventional sense, without the revaluation it has been subjected to hitherto in the Gita One who mechanistically abandons all action, and wishes thus to escape necessity, may be said to be one who is not fully aware of realities He is therefore dull and deluded Such a *samnyasa* (renunciation) which corresponds to the popular heterodox pattern, is the first mentioned and is condemned Other and more tolerable cases come later

Under the term *niyata* (ordained) can be included various grades of necessary action Breathing, for example, is a natural and necessary action for which the question of renunciation cannot arise If renunciation refers to scriptural ordinance, those who belong to orthodox social groups might consider it necessary, while to others it might seem artificial and un necessary Even among *samnyasins* (renouncers) there can be those who resemble Buddhist *bhikkus* (mendicants) or Jaina *svetambaras* (white clad ascetics), or other kinds of *munis* (quietists) Their renunciation becomes vitiated only to the extent that it is tainted by the motive mentioned in the second line as delusory To the extent that renunciation is normal and natural, it does not come under the scope of this verse Conversely, to the extent rituals are deemed necessary in a particular situation, they become justified or permissible

[8] *duhkham ity eva yat karma*
kayaklesabhyat tyajet
sa kritva rajasam tyagam
nai va tyagaphalam labhet

He who from fear of bodily trouble, relinquishes action considering it painful (thus) wilfully (with *rajas*) relinquishing, he does not get the (legitimate) benefit of relinquishment

Two intriguing phrases appear here, first *rajasam tyagam* (wilful and passionate relinquishment) and second, *tyaga phalam* (benefit of relinquishment) Neither would apply in the case of *samnyasa* (renunciation) pure and simple innocent of any orthodox values

That this is so is admitted in verse 12 later The meaning of the second expression should be read in the light of III 4 and XVIII, 49 Mere omission of actions would amount only to non action which has no reference to natural or inevitably necessary actions as its counterpart Such inevitable action has to be transcended by discipline which involves intermediate stages When such intermediate stages are wilfully omitted or through misplaced obstinacy due to egoism laziness etc neither the mature result indicated in the second expression here (the result of relinquishment) nor the more respectable perfection of verse 49 called *naishkarmyasiddhi* (perfection where man has nothing to do) comes about In III 4 the obverse and converse

of the same verity applicable to the *tyāgi* (relinquisher) and *samnyāsin* (renouncer) respectively, are stated together, to reveal the difference by contrast. Neither simple renunciation mechanistically understood, nor simple relinquishment, lifted from its organic context, would be considered conducive to spiritual progress.

[9] *kāryam ity eva yat karma*
niyatam kriyate 'rjuna
sangam tyaktvā phalam chai 'va
sa tyāgah sāttviko matah

When necessary action is done, O Arjuna, recognizing its imperative character, relinquishing attachment and benefit, such relinquishment is considered pure (*sāttvik*).

We note that the *gunas* (modalities of nature) in this set of verses 7 to 9, are referred to in inverse order. As the centre of interest has passed on to the side of necessity, the degree of necessity recognized under each item determines its superiority. To the extent the importance of a certain action as necessary is recognized, such action gains a superior status as a value in this Chapter.

By insisting on the avoidance of *sangam* (attachment) and *phalam* (fruit, benefit or result) it is prescribed that the actor should be free from even the desire for salvation as a spiritual benefit to the extent that it is a third factor in the form of a counter-attraction which could interfere with the strictly bipolar relation between the contemplative aspirant and the Absolute which is his soul.

[10] *na dveshty akusalam karma*
kusale nā 'nushajjate
tyāgī sattvasamāvishto
medhāvī chhinnasamsayah

The relinquisher pervaded with purity (*sattva*), and of strong intelligence, of sundered doubts, hates not unpleasant action, nor is he attached to one pleasant.

The neutrality of the pure way that a relinquisher can maintain is praised here preparatory to the next section culminating in verse 16 where egoism is denounced.

[11] *na hi dehabhrita sakyam*
tyaktum karmany aseshatah
yas tu karmaphalatyagi
sa tyagi 'ty abhidhiyate

Nor indeed is it possible for an embodied one to completely relinquish action, he who relinquishes the benefit of action is verily called a relinquisher

This verse suggests that as action is binding on all in one form or another, the best that a person can do is to eliminate objectives referring to personal gain, profit or benefit in general, which are here called the "fruit of action" The highest value in the wisdom context, however, which has been mentioned in verse 8 as the "fruit of relinquishment must not be included under the 'fruit of action" here The benefit of correct relinquishment must be the Absolute itself

What would fall strictly under this category of "fruit of action ' here and in II,47, would be those petty everyday benefits which fall outside what unitively joins the highest value and the actor himself Such third items of interest can have between themselves a varying range of values, good, bad or indifferent, as referred to in the next verse The true *samnyasin* (renouncer) who is also a yogi and a proper *tyagi* (relinquisher) in the Gita, is one who establishes a bipolar relationship between himself and the highest values possible, compatible with his own nature and capacity to understand absolute wisdom objectively

To the perfect *samnyasin* (renouncer) conforming to the model extolled in verse 49 later with whom even the distinction of actor (the means) and action (ends) has been abolished, by whom means and ends are unitively understood and whose personal life is adjusted through long perfecting the question of benefit of action in the sense of this verse does not even arise

[12] *anishtam ishtam misram cha*
trividham karmanah phalam
bhavaty atyaginam pretya
na tu samnyasinam kvachit

Pleasant unpleasant and mixed benefits accrue in the (spiritual) progress beyond of a non relinquisher (*atyagi*) but none anywhere to renouncers (*samnyasinah*)

The benefit that the *atyagi* (non relinquisher) gets is juxtaposed with what in a *samnyasin* (renouncer) never arises at all At the one end we have to imagine an ordinary man such as a materialist and at the other end one who has given up action because his reason has matured The latter has attained a perfection which requires no more action Both these persons resemble each other by their indifference to actions enjoined or made binding by the scriptures

The good, bad or indifferent results accruing from action should therefore be understood as natural or normal to all except one who has properly transcended action, *i e*, the true *samnyasin* (renouncer) The intermediate group of people who are called *tyagis* (relinquishers) because they neither conform to the natural man nor the ideal man, have to follow scriptural injunctions as far as they feel that such apply to their own case

This verse helps us indirectly to strike the balance between a *samnyasin* (renouncer) and a *tyagi* (relinquisher) which consists in this that the relinquisher still has need, according to himself or from force of circumstances for guidance from the scriptures He has to travel perforce from the appreciation of one grade of value implied in a scripture that he appreciates or adopts as his own to one that he might be able to appreciate later when his intelligence has matured or become perfected There is here an organic progression from a lower to a higher spiritual value

By subtracting the *samnyasin* (renouncer) from the natural man we get a precise notion of what is implied by the term *tyagi* (relinquisher) A wilful *samnyasin* (renouncer) negatively rejecting action is thus reduced to an absurdity, and it is the purpose of this verse to bring this into relief by a clever method of comparison implicit in what would appear a contrast The *abhava* (negation) of the Nyaya philosophers is here used with a skill which outwits them

[13] *panchai 'tani mahabaho*
karanani nibodha me
samkye kritante proktani
siddhaye sarvakarmanam

[14] *adhishthanam tatha karta*
karanam cha prithagvidham
vividhas cha prithakcheshta
daivam chai va tra panchamam

[15] *sariraianmanobhir yat*
karma prarabhate narah
nyayyam ia viparitam va
panchai te tasya hetavah

O Mighty Armed (Arjuna) learn from Me these five causes for the accomplishment of all actions as stated in the Samkhya at the end of the age called Krita

the basis and actor, and also the various (mental) instruments, the several and varied movements (activities), and fifth the divine factor

whatever action a man undertakes by the body, speech and mind, justifiable or the opposite these five are its causes

Here there is reference to the Samkhya (rationalist) system in which there are twenty five *tattvas* (principles) which are here reduced to five factors The Samkhya system gives primacy to twenty four empirical factors and *purusha* (spirit) which is the twenty fifth corresponds here to what is called *daivam* (the divine factor) This is a term foreign to Samkhya proper but attributed to that offshoot of Samkhya called *Sesiara* (theistic)

At one extremity of these five factors we have this principle of divinity corresponding to the *purusha* (spirit) and at the other extremity we have what is here called *adhishthanam* (basis) [see *Samkhya Karika* 17 and Gita III 40]

To determine in detail the exact corresponding items between the five here and the twenty five of Kapila s school is not necessary for our purposes The Gita here only wants to make out that the actor the second factor from the bas s is not to be treated as a disjunct and independently existing isolated entity broken away from the other four and treated as a separate *atma* (self) or soul with an individuality of its own This is stated in verse 16 For by giving the soul as the actor an independent status it becomes a free agent taking free decisions irrespective of the imperative forces acting on the individual in real life rationally understood To give such a status would be to neglect altogether necess ty as a force in life although philosophically such a status might be justified as it is done in purely contemplative texts

The Gita has a specific purpose in this Chapter, of reconciling actuality with high wisdom The preference for the methodology of Samkhya is therefore understandable This preference for Samkhya has been consistently maintained as we can see from ii, 39 iii, 3 and 4, v, 5 and xiii, 24 For methodological and epistemological purposes the Samkhya has been largely relied upon in enumerating various aspects of the Absolute, as in vii, 4 and in reference to characteristics of beings issuing from the Absolute, in x, 4 and 5 and in enumerating the unique values in Chapter x The Samkhya framework has never been abandoned Not only are the terms often borrowed and adapted (*e g*, the *gunas* or modalities of nature) but the underlying implicit method is also closely akin to the Samkhya

Regarding *kritanta* (the end of the first or golden age called Krita) which can also be interpreted as ' end of action we find the former meaning more acceptable, as the Gita makes historical references such as to Manu in iv, 1, etc Here it refers to the time of Kapila, the Samkhya exponent The reference to actions that are justifiable and its opposite is to show that there is no choice of any kind in the actor at all. He is caught in absolute necessity

[16] *tatrai 'vam sati kartaram*
atmanam kevalam tu yah
pasyaty akritabuddhitvan
na sa pasyati durmatih

Now, such being the case, the man of perverted mind who, because of unfinished intelligence, looks upon himself as the isolated agent of action, he does not see indeed

This factor of absolute necessity referred to in the last verse is here further stressed One who cannot understand this imperative force in which the individual is helplessly caught is called a *durmatih* (a man of perverted mind)

The word *atma* (self) cannot be taken to mean the one Self as often suggested as an alternative meaning by Sankara and others The necessary context here presupposes nature whose laws are fixed and unchangeable Philosophically it is true that all actions could be attributed to the one Self as representing the Absolute No reference to the Samkhya philosophy would

have been necessary if this had been in the mind of the author

Akritabuddhitvat (because of unfinished intelligence) indicates that the person meant here has not had the preliminary training of a finished Vedantin in the methods belonging to rational schools such as Nyaya and Samkhya

[17] *yasya na hamkrito bhavo*
buddhir yasya na lipyate
hatva pi sa imaml lokan
na hanti na nibadhyate

He who is free from ego sense whose intelligence is unaffected though he kills these people he neither kills nor is bound

This verse contains the same doctrine as in II 38 It is theoretically permitted in the Gita that even when killing one is not doing anything Herein lies the Samkhya attitude with a vengeance It is stated more pointedly in II 19 and the same theory of freedom from agency in action is implied in V 8 and 9

Whether approached from the transcendental or the immanent side the neutrality implied in the agent here comes to the same thing Here it is from the immanent or necessary side that the neutrality is arrived at

[18] *jnanam jneyam parijnata*
trividha karmachodana
karanam karma karte ti
trividhah karmasamgrahah

Knowledge the knowable and the knower (are) the three fold incentive to action the (mental) instrument the action and the actor are the three-fold aggregate base of action

Here contemplative values as such are treated in the same way as values of action When carefully studied these two sets show a kinship They also imply a disparity belonging to two different aspects altogether The difference between them has been sufficiently explained in Chapter XIII There however the mutual watertight compartmentalization of these two

aspects was somewhat modified, some interaction between them being made possible through an over all Paramount Person (in Chapter xv)

The subject of psycho physical interaction in xv, 10, was avowedly a mystery left unravelled Spiritual values belonging to a contemplative order cannot be pinned down as cut and dried entities as in empiricism In this Chapter which, as we have said gives central place to necessary action, wisdom is objectified and in the next verse is considered as a positive factor which the knower is capable of including within the range of his active thinking If we admit that thought is a form of action just as dream is the action of the subconscious psyche it would not be a violation of principle to include knowledge itself as a value belonging to the context of activity

In the present verse the two sets are spoken of distinctly for purposes of being treated unitively only in the next verse The veil of mystery which was present regarding the question of psycho-physical interaction may be said still to remain even here between these two sets called *karmachodana* (incentive to action) and *karmasamgraha* (aggregate basis of action)

The latter strictly belongs to the field of actuality where alone action may be said to exist horizontally The former set may be said to pertain vertically to the perceptual. In iv, 17, it has been shown that the course of activity is *gahana* (profound or mysterious) The mystery involved here in what concerns the right action to be recommended to Arjuna has therefore already been recognized by the author The relation between action and contemplation is hard to visualize and we have to assume it at least for the purpose of discussion here in the same way as the author takes it for granted in the next verse, where he places knowledge action and actor in a new and unitively-conceived series of his own There is, however, a striking resemblance between his own three categories and the very elaborate categories mentioned under the *tattvas* (true principles) of the Samkhya philosophy Here at least we have these reduced and simplified in a form acceptable even to Vedic orthodoxy

[19] *jnanam karma cha karta cha*
tridhaiva gunabhedatah
prochyate gunasamkhyane
yathavach chhrinu tany api

Even knowledge, action and actor are said, according to modality difference by way of their enumeration according to the modalities, to be of three kinds, hear you of them (as they are) actually

After arriving in this verse at a three limbed formulation of the three factors entering into a situation involving action (the subject of this Chapter), in his own way as we have said, the author wishes to grade action values belonging to these three factors into further subdivisions These are examined in the light of the theory of the *gunas* (modalities of nature) as conditionings dividing each of these three values Thus we come to many subdivisions of values into grades or degrees of value each conceived on a triple basis

This amounts to presenting three kinds of conditioning applied to each of the three constituents of action thus making nine subdivisions The actor gains primacy as the enumeration proceeds and action values such as wisdom reason or discretion, firmness and happiness as belonging primarily to the actor will be comparatively described one after another with reference to the three modalities of nature

The personal action value called firmness conditioned under the affective passionate modality (*rajasa guna*) in verse 34 is going to be tacitly recommended to Arjuna in this Chapter, as it has already been recommended in II 31 in order to make him face the battle with that kind of reason discretion belonging to wisdom

The recognition of these facts will help us in following the ensuing thread of thought of the author in the complications brought about by simultaneous treatment of subtle spirit conditionings and action values

[20] *sarvabhuteshu yenai kam*
bhavam avyayam ikshate
avibhaktam vibhakteshu
taj jnanam viddhi sattvikam

That by which the One unexpended Being is seen in all beings, undivided in the divided Know you that knowledge as pure (*sattvik*)

This and the two following verses refer to the knowledge component of verse 19 as conditioned by the three modalities

of nature When knowledge is conditioned by the pure or *sattvik* modality we have a thinker who may be called a philosopher of a high order Not only is he able to generalize and see unity, but his thinking is able to penetrate to the root of paradoxes such as the one and the many

[21] *prithaktvena tu yaj jnanam*
nanabhavan prithagvidhan
vetti sarveshu bhuteshu
taj jnanam viddhi rajasam

The knowledge which sees multiplicity of beings in the different kinds because of separateness as distinct, know that knowledge as affectively pragmatic (*rajasik*)

Here an empirical and realistic approach to life which conforms to a rationalist outlook incapable of rising above particulars into any world of universals, is stated

[22] *yat tu kritsnavad ekasmin*
karye saktam ahetukam
atattvarthavad alpam cha
tat tamasam udahritam

But that which clings to one single effect as if it were the whole, without reason, without meaning, based on any principle and insignificant, that is called the inert dark (*tamasik*)

Blindly clinging to particular values with exaggerated affection, to the exclusion of the universal aspects implied in the particular, reflects a lazy state of mind called here dark or *tamasik*

[23] *niyatam sangarahitam*
aragadveshatah kritam
aphalaprepsuna karma
yat tat sattvikam uchyate

[24] *yat tu kamepsunā karma*
sahamkarena va punah
kriyate bahulayasam
tad rajasam udahritam

[25] *anubandham kshayam himsam*
anapekshya cha paurusham
mohad arabhyate karma
yat tat tamasam uchyate

An action which is obligatory, performed without attachment, without affection or disregard, by one not benefit motivated, that is called pure (*sattvik*)

But that action done with great strain by one desire prompted, or again, possessed of egoism is called affective passionate (*rajasik*)

The action undertaken from confusion (of values) disregarding consequences, loss or injury, and human limitations, that is called dark (*tamasik*)

Action itself as a value is graded into three classes in these three verses Notice that the modalities of thought covered in the last three verses came prior to action itself Thinking being an impulse is thus given priority Knowledge in its revalued status is common to both the sets mentioned in verses 18 and 19

In verse 23 the action is natural and free from attachment. In verse 24 it is laboured and with attachment In verse 25 its possibilities and scope are not clear to the actor These three represent respectively the degree of insight of pragmatic intelligence and of desperate confusion on the part of the actors in each case

[26] *muktasango nahamvadi*
dhrityutsaha samanvitah
siddhyasiddhyor nirvikarah
karta sattvika uchyate

[27] *ragi karmaphalaprepsur*
lubdho himsatmako suchih
harshasokanvitah karta
rajasah parikirtitah

[28] *ayuktah prakritah stabdhah*
satho naikritiko lasah
vishadi dirghasutri cha
karta tamasa uchyate

> The actor, free from attachment, who avoids references to himself in the first person, endowed with firmness and zeal, unmoved by success or failure, is called pure (*sattvik*)
>
> The actor, passionate, prompted by desire for benefits, greedy, violent natured, maladjusted (*asuchi*), with (moods of) exaltation and depression, is called affective passionate (*rajasik*)
>
> The actor (who is a) misfit, crude, stubborn, deceitful, malicious, lazy, despondent, procrastinating, is called dark (*tamasik*)

From action we pass on subjectively to the actor in this next set of three verses The basis of classification is sufficiently familiar to us Here the actor himself in his person represents the value mentioned, whereas in former cases the values were endowments only The subject and object therefore tend to draw closer together as we proceed

When Arjuna is asked to fight, in virtue of his inclusion in the category of those possessing high or divine endowments in xvi, 5, he may here be considered, not a mere *kshattriya* (warrior) as in verse 34 later, but as a pure actor, which would raise him above that particular type

[29] *buddher bhedam dhrites chai 'va*
gunatas trividham srinu
prochyamanam aseshena
prithaktvena dhanamjaya

> Hear now the threefold difference of reason and firmness also, according to the modalities of nature, O Winner of Wealth (Arjuna), to be set forth fully and severally

There are three more values which may be assumed to be derived from the principle of necessary action pertaining to the actor In the battlefield these values called here (1) discretion or reason (2) bravery or firmness and (3) happiness (the latter referred to in verse 36), can be seen to have a place A seasoned warrior is happy and stays at his post and uses his discretion to the best advantage The happiness of a

warrior has been mentioned in II, 32 Happiness amounting to bliss we know belongs to the yogi It is eloquently described in the definition of a yogi in VI, 20 and directly alluded to as the essence of yoga in VI, 21

Even when we take firmness as the personal quality of an actor, we find in XVIII, 33 that it is possible to think of firmness in the pure contemplative context of yoga, forgetting all about battlefields Again, if we scrutinize the meaning of *buddhi* (reason) it can just mean discretion as a part of valour on the battlefield, or it can be understood in the larger context of philosophy We find that the words *buddhi* (reason) and *buddhi yoga* (unitive reasoning) in II, 49, and X, 10, etc, have a very important place in the teaching of the Gita

Samkhya (rationalist) philosophy itself is based on reasoning and we have already noticed that the Gita teaching relies on the Samkhya in many ways In understanding with any precision the meaning of the three values to be immediately described, we are obliged to keep together in mind the larger context and the more particular one of this Chapter, *i e*, warfare, at least till we transcend verse 63 between which verse and the next, 64, there is a clear distinction intended by the author himself as expressed in the two kinds or degrees of secrets mentioned

In the treatment of these values here, according to the modalities of nature as before, we find, some statements apply to the particular war context, while others, usually the first mentioned, belong to the larger context the philosophical, in each case and under each modality In the reading of each verse we must therefore carefully differentiate between these references

[30] *pravrittim cha nivrittim cha*
karyakarye bhayabhaye
bandham moksham cha ya vetti
buddhih sa partha sattviki

That reason which knows the positive way of action and the negative way of inaction what ought to be done and what ought not to be done what is to be feared and what is not to be feared the binding and the liberating (actions), O Partha (Arjuna), is pure (*sattvik*)

The terms *pravritti* (positive way of action) and *nivritti* (negative way of inaction) are known to philosophy On the battlefield reason having the complexion of discretion only, these terms have to be taken to indicate what is meant by advance or retreat

The pair of terms *bandha* (bondage) and *moksha* (liberation) may refer to necessity and contingency respectively in philosophy or, in the limited context of warfare, to how far one is trapped or how far one has the advantage of choice

[31] *yaya dharmam adharmam cha*
karyam cha karyam eva cha
ayathavat prajanati
buddhih sa partha rajasi

That reason which takes right and wrong, the permissible and the banned, in a sense incompatible with reality, that, O Partha (Arjuna), is affective-passionate (*rajasik*)

In the active or affective passionate (*rajasik*) attitude, social rather than personal values enter in In deciding whether a certain action is right or wrong such a person is confused between purely moral or religious values and those derived merely from social convention, and prefers the latter This must be the meaning implied in the phrase *ayathavat* (not as they are intrinsically) If this word is translated as "mistakenly" there would be no difference between this *rajasik* actor's reasoning and that of the dark or *tamasik* one

[32] *adharmam dharmam iti ya*
manyate tamasā 'vrita
sarvarthan viparitams cha
buddhih sa partha tamasi

That reason enveloped in darkness, which regards wrong as right and sees all values pervertedly, O Partha (Arjuna), is dark (*tamasik*)

The mistaken judgment about values becomes more markedly perverted in the case of the dark or *tamasik* type Not only is such a person incapable of judgment in the matter of right

and wrong, but he insists on the wrong being right through misunderstanding

[33] *dhrityā yaya dharayate*
manahpranendriyakriyah
yogena 'vyabhicharinya
dhritih sa partha sattviki

[34] *yaya tu dharmakamarthan*
dhritya dharayate 'rjuna
prasangena phalakankshi
dhritih sa partha rajasi

[35] *yaya svapnam bhayam sokam*
vishadam madam eva cha
na vimunchati durmedha
dhritih sa partha tamasi

The firmness by which the activities of mind, vital functions and the senses, O Partha (Arjuna), are kept from deflecting (from the true path) by yoga, is pure (*sattvik*)

But the firmness by which one holds fast to duty and pleasures and wealth, desirous of the result of each when the occasion presents itself, that firmness, O Partha (Arjuna), is affective-passionate (*rajasik*)

That by which a stupid man does not give up sleep, fear, grief, despondency and wantonness, that firmness, O Partha (Arjuna), is dark (*tamasik*)

How firmness is to be understood in the context of yoga has already been explained and is sufficiently clear in verse 33 here The best way to understand this value is in the context of the affective passionate modality discussed in verse 34, especially in the reference to *dharma* (duty) Holding fast to duty is not the highest or purest expression of firmness. It is relegated to the middle category Thus even here where the factor of necessity is centralized and keen the author gives primacy to contemplative firmness, even above holding fast to duty (which we remember Arjuna is asked to do)

When a king is called a "Defender of the Faith" he conforms to this sub-division of value. Whether Arjuna as a person admitted to the order of those who possess high or divine endowments, when he finally consents to obey Krishna in verse 73 of this Chapter, does so in conformity with what verse 33 implies or with the implications of verse 34, or perhaps with *both*, is left an open question.

The firmness of the dark-dull *tamasik* person is negative in character. Sleep, fear, etc, mentioned there cannot imply true positive firmness When it amounts to perversity, stupidity is called firmness here, but this is a misnomer in the context.

[36] *sukham tv idānim trividham*
srinu me bharatarshabha
abhyāsād ramate yatra
duhkhāntam cha nigachchhati

[37] *yat tad agre visham iva*
parināme 'mritopamam
tat sukham sattvikam proktam
atmabuddhi prasādajam

[38] *vishayendriya samyogād*
yat tad agre 'mritopamam
parinâme visham iva
tat sukham rājasam smritam

[39] *yad agre chā 'nubandhe cha*
sukham mohanam ātmanah
nidrālasyapramadottham
tat tamasam udahritam

And now hear from Me, O Best of the Bhāratas (Arjuna), the three kinds of happiness, that in which one by practice rejoices, and in which he reaches the end of pain;

that happiness which is like gall at first, ambrosial at the end, born of lucid self-understanding, is called pure (*sattvik*),

that happiness arising out of contact of senses with objects, at first like ambrosia, at the end like gall, is called affective-passionate (*rajasik*),

> that happiness which at first and in after-effects is self confounding, arising from sleep, lassitude and listlessness, is called dark (*tamasik*).

The last item pertaining to action-values is *sukham* (happiness) In the yogic context disaffiliation from suffering marks the minimal point, and the attainment of ultimate happiness, the maximal, as stated in VI, 23 and 21, where yoga is defined In the light of that definition the meaning of verse 36 must apply to these requirements of yoga

The joy of a warrior is not excluded from happiness as understood here The chance for a righteous battle has been called an open gate to heaven in II, 32 Such joy is to be thought of when absolutism is fully intended and in such a case there is no difference between pleasure, happiness and bliss In the other three grades belonging to the modalities of nature, they could be differentiated as representing supreme happiness, relative or transient happiness and negative satisfaction

[40] *na tad asti prithivyam vā*
divi deveshu vā punah
sattvam prakritijair muktam
yad ebhih syat tribhir gunaih

> There is no entity either on earth or again in heaven among the (Vedic) divinities that could be free from these three modalities born from nature

Before entering on the next section which extends from verses 41 to 49, the present verse can be said to be a punctuation mark concluding the general discussion of the subject of values in the field of action understood in relation to the modalities This verse is also an enunciation of the general principle on which the much misunderstood fourfold division of society mentioned in verses 41 and 42 is to be based

It remains for the author to close in necessary values pertaining to the context of action in dealing more directly than hitherto with the person of the actor himself The actor, in his more concrete aspect, is a type of person who has a body which can be seen as actual and a vocation or trade which he plies Thus he constitutes as a living person the combination of two aspects which meet in his personality These come, as it were, from opposite sides of reality

There are, on the one hand, his subjective or inner temperaments and aptitudes which depend largely on the modality which enters into his life to modify his conduct whether for good or ill On the other hand, this subjective factor has its counterpart coming from the crude or brute world of actuality itself, which can be said to be outside and independent of the person Matter here meets mind

Between these two counterparts or tendencies conceived in actuality there is an equilibrium to be established, the resultant of which is called right or meaningful action, or at least action which is not absurd All *sat karma* (good or true actions) as understood at the end of Chapter XVII are comprised under this general title of action

We have already noted that the author of the Gita reconciles orthodoxy and heterodoxy in his own delicately conceived revaluation of Samkhya, Yoga and Vedism, not to mention gift making and austerity When he has such an attitude of revaluation, he cannot justly omit at least a passing reference to the three grades of *varnyas* (aspirants to perfection in the Vedic context) These *varnyas* have in the first place to be distinguished from hereditary *jati* (kinds) or *kula* (clans), references to which are conspicuously absent, at least on the part of Krishna, whose words count as representing the *Guru* of the Gita Arjuna in his delusion does refer to them in I, 43, but that reference has to be taken as a *purva paksha* (anterior opinion) and should not be taken as included in the teaching of the Gita

The first reference to the subject of divisions among men not based on heredity occurs in IV, 13, where it is clearly stated that the Absolute itself is the principle on which the division of *varnyas* is based It is further said to be scientifically based on the principle of fitting the temperament or aptitude of a person into the corresponding type of vocation available for him in the world of actuality Looked at in this way, the three principal groups and the fourth one consisting of the *sudra* (servant) mentioned in the next verse here could be understood rationally by anyone, including a modern man of the East or West, somewhat as follows

There are always in this human world four main vocations available Plato recognizes them as the philosopher, the soldier, the man of affairs and the servant If we should think of the world into which an Oxford or Harvard graduate enters or one into which the common man, who has not been to college,

has to fit by necessity, we can speak of these four divisions as consisting of (1) holy orders, (2) military service, (3) business and (4) wage-earning. Even in modern Russian society the terms might be modified into priests, soldiers, commissars and proletarians. These four divisions have existed and still exist in all societies, whether explicitly or implicitly, with slight variations of locality and period. Political and economic forces have had their effect in such matters, changing the complexion of the social structure during different periods of history, but these general divisions have always been there.

It is in this sense that in IV, 13, the Absolute principle itself is said to be behind these four divisions. Even then we should notice that there is a saving clause in the second line of that verse, wherein the necessary is cancelled out by the contingent aspect of the same Absolute principle.

Therefore although in the set up of society belonging to the necessary context of life, the four divisions are valid, when contingent factors enter into it, the rigidity is dissolved and we have a society of free individuals whose gradation in the scale of superiority or inferiority is abolished in favour of an equality of status, as clearly expressed in IX, 32, where even *sudras* (servants) can aspire to the highest wisdom, not to speak of those who are said to be born of 'lowly wombs'.

The whole subject of this coming section reduces itself to one of choice of vocation depending on inner temperament. The deep-seated origins of inner temperament based on modalities which are stated to be binding forces in XIV, 5 have been explained in sufficient detail with graded examples concerning each possible sub division.

The separation between actor and action has now narrowed down to such an extent that the inner temperament of a particular type of person and his proper vocation could be spoken of as fitting to each other resulting in individuals who are not misfits. There is no mistake in calling them vocational types determined by actual necessity on one side and temperamental suitability on the other. Life, if it is to go on normally, as it must, requires that these two aspects are not only brought into agreement, but are even juxtaposed and fused one with the other to produce a correct vocational type of person. A vocational misfit cannot be said to be true to himself. He is at best a freak, an eyesore or an absurdity.

These types have nothing in common with tribal, caste or fissiparous separatist units flourishing in every society, based on

sentimental exclusiveness and having nothing to do with temperament or necessity understood as being harmoniously matched in them. Social units not based on this principle of vocational types, such as the numerous castes of India, have at best a status as forms of religious absurdity or nuisance. In India these types have tended to be spoken of with a certain implied grouping into superior and inferior hereditary classes of men. When the Aryans penetrated into India the pre-Aryan peoples who were not inferior to them in culture, had to be taken for purposes of war strategy as persons outside the pale of Aryan orthodoxy, and made to correspond to serfs or slaves.

This tendency is not peculiar to Aryans. In recent times even Hitler claimed Aryan superiority. Aryans were essentially ritualistic and any value outside the fire-sacrifice was legitimately despised and mistrusted by them. They could not tolerate a *sūdra* (historically a slave of the invader) arrogating to himself any status within their own closed social formation.

As the Vedic religion broadened out, however, by coming into contact with the *rishis* (seers) who lived in the forests of India, and who represented a more ancient and negative way of wisdom, it became open and dynamic instead of static and closed. Revaluators such as Vyāsa, through the words of Krishna of the Gita, threw open the gates of Upanishadic wisdom and admitted even the *sūdras* (servants or slaves) into the right of walking in the path of wisdom (as in IX, 32).

Coming closer to the subject of the four divisions themselves, as mentioned in this next section, its basis is to be found in the *Manu Smriti* (*Laws of Manu*) where it is said:

> "But in order to protect this universe He the most resplendent one, assigned separate (duties and) occupations to those who sprang from the arms, thighs and feet.
>
> "To brahmins He assigned teaching and studying (of the Veda), sacrificing for their own benefit and for others, giving and accepting (of alms). (88).
>
> "The kshatriya He commanded to protect the people, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study (the Veda) and to abstain from attaching himself to sensual pleasures.
>
> "The vaishya to tend cattle, to bestow gifts, to study (the Veda), to trade, to lend money and to cultivate land. (90).

"One occupation only the Lord prescribed to the *sūdra*, to serve meekly even these (other) three castes. (1, 87-91).

—*The Laws of Manu*: trans G. Buhler, S B E. Oxford, 1886

The extent to which this original basis has been modified and revalued here in the Gita is glaringly evident to anyone who reads the above side by side with the qualifications of the several divisions mentioned in the Gita.

In verse 41, we notice by the use of the word *karmani* (actions) that it is necessary action which is at the basis of the divisions here. *Karma*(action)belongs to the actual world of necessity and therefore corresponds to the mould rather than to the liquid, while the liquid corresponds to the natural dispositions of temperament of the actor. These flow into the mould to fit into the necessity of a situation. The word *karma* (action) is repeated in every case.

But examination of some of the items constituting action, such as serenity and self-restraint, especially as applied to the *brahmin* and the *kshattriya* in verses 42 and 43, reveals that they are negative or contemplative in character, and cannot be called proper actions at all

Firmness and not running away from his appointed post in battle, as vocational qualifications of the *kshattriya* cannot be called active occupations In the case of *vaishyas* and *sūdras* who are, as it were, bracketed together and included in one verse (44), it is hardly fair to say that cultivation or servitude are freely chosen according to temperament

To be a man of affairs requires capital and without capital one is pushed into the place of a proletarian by force of necessity. Conscious matching of temperament with occupation does not hold good in these cases A stray dog will eat a cake as well as left-over scraps without being able to choose between them. To say that it does not deserve a cake would be an unfair reflection on its character Aristocratic lap-dogs can cultivate superior taste if there is the chance It can be admitted that a hound has a liking for or consciously prefers the chase These revalued groupings even here have therefore to be understood with a certain latitude and imagination.

Moreover available vocations in modern times have multiplied beyond measure. The ground staff on an airfield required special aptitudes different from those of a pilot. A criminal

lawyer requires an acumen different from a professor of theoretical law. Thus in every department the range of variety in vocations available has become so complicated today that it sounds archaic to modern ears even to refer to the four divisions as in the Gita. Dr. Alexis Carrel, in his book *L'Homme cet Inconnu* (*Man the Unknown*) complains:

> " Instead of recognizing the necessary diversity of human beings, the industrial civilization has compressed them within four classes: the rich, the proletarian, the peasant and the middle class. The employee, the instructor, the policeman, the pastor, the small medical man, the savant, the professor of the university and the shopkeeper who constitute the middle class have more or less the same kind of life. These types which are so different in status are classed together not according to their personality, but according to their financial position." (*translated*)

The author of the Gita refers to the four divisions, it must be presumed, by way of concession to Vedic orthodoxy which he does not want to slight by neglect. This is evident from the fact that, after this section, there is an extra sub-section where the non-vocational way of life of a rationally-minded spiritual man is portrayed, which conforms more closely to the Gita pattern of teaching, in verses 51 to 53.

Even the requirements of this Chapter, which is conceived on the basis of conforming to an actual war situation, is transcended after verse 53. After verse 64, we find all asymmetrical considerations peculiar to this Chapter and arising from the structure of the work, to be discarded, with the Gita coming to its culminating teaching in fully contemplative language.

The present lengthy comment on this coming section can be excused, because of the fact that this theory of castes or what is called *varnāshramadharma* (caste-stage-duty) has vitiated equality, justice and fairplay in Indian life for many centuries. In the minds even of people like Mahatma Gandhi it is a matter of much confused theory and practice. It has even vitiated politics in the meting out of fair justice in law courts where Manu is still quoted. Two examples from Manu will suffice to indicate this injustice with which verse 78 of the Gita is equally concerned.

"No collection of wealth must be made by a sūdra, even though he is able (to do it) for a sūdra who has acquired wealth gives pain to brahmins" (x, 129)

"A brahmin may confidently seize the goods of (his) sūdra (slave) for as that (slave) can have no property, his master may take his possessions" (viii, 417)

The masses of India have awakened keenly to this injustice which has corrupted Indian life. Several Hindu reformist and religious movements have raised voices of protest against it but have been lukewarm or apologetic in their attitude

It is to the credit of Guru Narayana (1855-1928) to have spoken out unequivocally and declared "For men their humanity is their caste" (*manushanam manushatvam jatih*) and also "Brahmins, etc, are not such (castes)" (*na brahmanadhih asya evam*) His attitude agrees with the Gita in throwing open freely the highest of spiritual attainments whether Vedic or non-Vedic to all human beings, thus recognizing one *jati*, caste or kind only

It will be a consolation to the modern world also to learn from this commentary, that the Gita does not support any closed form of spirituality but that it is a contemplative text-book acceptable to the whole world Any slight vestige still remaining has to be overlooked and explained in the light of the antiquity of the Gita itself

Coming to the present verse 40, the reference to earth and heaven, in spite of its extensive scope, does not include the whole cosmos of which the *purushottama* (Paramount Person) is the Absolute principle The entities here still belong to the relative world within the Vedic framework of values covered by the lower of the two *purushas* (spirits, persons) of xv, 16

[41] *brahmana kshatriya visam*
sudranam cha paramtapa
karmani pravibhaktani
svabhavaprabhavair gunaih

Of *brahmins* (quiet contemplatives) *kshattriyas* (active contemplatives), *vaishyas* (men of affairs) and of *sudras* (proletarians) too O Conqueror of the Foe (Arjuna), vocations are separately assigned in conformity with the modalities arising from their own nature

Sankara thinks that the three in the first mentioned group are to be distinguished from the last by the latter not having any right for Vedic studies This is one of the minor examples of how, as we have stated elsewhere, Sankara tacitly connives at hereditary caste, as with Manu Perhaps in his time it was too much to expect him not to do so, lest orthodoxy, already mistrusting him as a *prachchhanna bauddha* (Buddhist in disguise) should disown him altogether

The mention of *sūdra* (servant, proletarian) disjunctly in this verse can be taken in the light that *vaisya* (merchant-farmer, man of affairs) covers *sudra* to some extent, since both have occupations outside the scope of contemplative values as a scrutiny of verse 44 will reveal To mention the latter on a par with the others would involve a fourth modality group as a kind of mixed sub-division Moreover in IX, 32, *vaisyas*, *sūdras* and women are seen already grouped together under one generic group of those of "sinful" or non-contemplative origin

The *brahmin* represents the pure modality (*sattva*), the *kshatriya* (warrior) the active-passionate modality (*rajas*) and all the other three mentioned in IX, 32, could be mentioned indifferently as examples of a third grade covering the dark modality (*tamas*) and other non-contemplative values

We have said that the word *karmani* (actions) is incompatible with such values as serenity, mentioned in verse 42, except in a very extended sense

Sankara has three alternative theories regarding *svabhāva* (own nature) If the three alternatives do not prove anything else, it at least shows us that we are treading on very delicate disputed ground when we deal with these factors. No cut and dried division of occupations to agree with temperaments seems possible, and if such a possibility is conceded it should be done as a concession made to those spiritual qualities implicit in the Vedic religion, which the author does not wish to slight by omission

[42] *samo damas tapah saucham*
kshantir arjavam eva cha
jnānam vijnānam astikyam
brahmakarma svabhavajam

Calmness, self-restraint, austerity, purity, forgiveness and straightforwardness, (pure) wisdom, applied

wisdom, belief these are the (items of) activity of the *brahmin*, born of his own nature

The items referred to as constituting the duty or work belonging to a *brahmin's* vocation which accords with his own nature have all a familiar ring in our ears None of them have an obligatory character to justify its being included as a duty, nor are they justified in being mentioned as activities

In the free contemplative discussion of spiritual values in the Gita, which is a non-obligatory textbook of wisdom, we find frequent mention of such and similar values in previous Chapters When we remember that Chapter x has no connection with necessity or obligation, the pure contemplative character of the items listed in x, 4 cannot be doubted In xi, 1, Arjuna refers to Chapter x as dealing with *adhyatma* (pertaining to the Self) This further proves the same Further, comparing these items here with such regular acts as offering sacrifices and teaching the Vedas, mentioned by Manu as being duties belonging to a *brahmin* (quoted under verse 40), the root and branch revaluation of the basis of the four groupings in the Gita as it deviates from Manu must be clear even to the superficial reader

The *brahmin* of this verse, unlike the *brahmin* of Manu, is one who is sublimated or glorified in the light of contemplation, with no vestiges of obligation clinging to the high pattern of his spiritual life While it would be good for those who vociferously claim brahminism for themselves through magnified religious egoism to aspire for these truly spiritual qualities for purposes of healthy emulation, to claim such as a prerogative belonging to a closed and static group in society can only be considered an anachronistic conceit The true *brahmin* of the Gita approximates to a type of contemplative rather than a ritualist and resembles in this way both the *tyagi* (relinquisher) and the *samnyasin* (renouncer)

[43] *sauryam tejo dhritir dakshyam*
yuddhe cha 'py apalayanam
danam isvarabhavas cha
kshatram karma svabhavajam

Prowess brightness, firmness skill, and also never-absconding generosity and dignity of men refer to

the (pattern of) activity of the *kshattriya*, born of his own nature.

Among the items belonging to the *kshattriya* (warrior) we can single out *isvarabhāva* (lordly or dignified mien) and *dānam* (generosity) as glaringly absent in Manu's list. Instead, we find in Manu that sacrifices and the study of the Vedas and political protection of the people are mentioned. Here we have again the picture of a sublimation, this time of the warrior here who, except in the quality called skill or dexterity, cannot be said to be very active as a representative of the active-passionate modality (*rajas*) with which his vocation is said to tally. The quality called *dākshyam* (skill) is one incapable of being imagined as a binding obligation.

Apparently the Gita does not see the possibility of envisaging either a political type of *brahmin* on the one hand, or of excluding from its recognized groupings a *kshattriya* (warrior) who is a non-combatant, non-political contemplative. The *rāja-rishis* (philosopher-kings) of IV, 2, and IX, 33, held up as models or types in the Gita, are both contemplatives and men of action who could not strictly be included in any one of the four divisions as seen in Manu. Reference to women who could conform to contemplative patterns of behaviour is conspicuous by its absence although the possibility of high spiritual endowments in women finds mention in X, 34.

[44] *krishi gaurakshya vānijyam*
vaisyakarma svabhāvajam
paricharyātmakam karma
sūdrasyā 'pi svabhāvajam

Ploughing, tending cattle, and trade are the (items of) vocation of the *vaisya*, born of his own nature; work of the nature of menial service is likewise born of the *sūdra's* own nature.

Comparison with Manu under this verse reveals that *vaisyas* (merchant-farmers) there had also to offer sacrifices and learn the Vedas, which is again glaringly absent here. Here they are degraded almost on a level with the poor *sūdra* (servant) whose one duty according to both Manu and the Gita is to serve his master.

Every *sudra* (servant), it must be conceded, would like to be promoted to the grade of a *vaisya* (merchant farmer) if only he had the required capital There seems to be no difference between them spiritually, unless the *sudra* (servant) represents a sub normal or wrongly conditioned individual Recent history in India has proved that many aboriginal or hill tribes make good soldiers Missionaries have proved that the lower "castes" offer good human material which, when polished and presented, can vie with the best of *brahmins* and *kshattriyas* Moreover, many of the superior qualities attributed to the first two groups are capable of being brought about by nurture though not found in nature

[45] *sve sve karmany abhiratah*
samsiddhim labhate narah
svakarmaniratah siddhim
yatha vindati tach chhrinu

Devoted each to his own occupation, man reaches perfection (in practical yoga) how, devoted to his own occupation, he attains such perfection, that do hear

The next four verses could be taken as constituting a section relating to the same question of occupations and duties It contains the theory, much spoken of as an important contribution, and sometimes referred to as the doctrine, of *svadharma* (own duty) of the Gita It has already been referred to more properly in ii 35, and the whole of the theory elaborated here has been more briefly and strikingly stated already In ii 31 and 33, there is reference to the same term *svadharma* (own duty), not as a theory, but as an imperative necessity in actual circumstances meant for Arjuna to recognize At the end of this Chapter we are again closing up on actualities as we have already pointed out The theory of *svadharma* (own duty) is treated here both in its practical and contemplative implications at the same time

The *siddhi* (attainment) cannot be considered as spiritual perfection, inasmuch as after such a perfection in its fullest sense, as employed in verse 49 later there is still a long way to go, as stated in verse 50 before one is fit to become the Absolute as stated in verse 53 Perfection in the context of action, or even of practical yoga which is usually called a

siddhi (attainment) is only a stepping stone to the final contemplative perfection in the fuller sense of the Gita's teaching which is yet to be distinctly outlined

Note the slight difference between this verse which refers to *svakarma* (own action) and the *svadharma* (own duty) of III, 35, and reverted to in verse 47 later Simple *karma* (action) can be a necessity without moral implications, while the idea of *dharma* (duty) has in it an implied moral conscience Duty is something a man feels he ought to do because of his convictions There is a certain choice But in simple *karma* (action) the margin of choice for the actor is very narrow

[46] *yatah pravrittir bhutanam*
yena sarvam idam tatam
svakarmana tam abhyarchya
siddhim vindati manavah

He from whom all existences come forth, and by whom all this is pervaded, by offering worship to Him with his own occupation, man wins perfection

This verse enunciates a very important principle which we have noticed running throughout the Gita teaching It is that of establishing proper bipolarity by the individual to whatever high ideal he is capable of postulating on the side of the transcendent

The counterparts here are (1) the actual actor who is plying his own trade here below immanently present and (2) the above mentioned transcendent principle described here as the source of all activity resulting in all beings, and who pervades every thing hereunder These qualifications are expressly made very plain, as if in a popular theological style, because if we take the instance of a *sudra* he will not be able to think of the Absolute with all the attributes by which according to more philosophical writing, the Absolute could be presented

It is not necessary either, for the bipolar condition to be fulfilled correctly, in the context of contemplation, that the notion of the Absolute should be of a philosophically high order As long as the counterparts are within the range of human nature or intelligence, they satisfy the required condition and would tend towards perfection when unitively brought together through worship

Again in verse 58 later Arjuna is threatened with a similar destruction if he fails to think of the Absolute and will not listen These disasters can have meaning only in a purely contemplative setting The evil of missing or mistaking one s profession is not therefore so grave as it would appear from the verse here In this section it was just now stressed that a strictly bipolar relation has to be secured between an actor and his ideal for contemplation to bear its results in any spiritual progress leading to perfection It is in the light of this principle clearly enunciated that we should understand how one s own duty is better than the well performed duty of another It is meant to be contemplatively and not logically true by the author Such paradoxes are not unfamiliar in the exposition of the subject of contemplation, as we have noted already

Another man's duty by its very name implies that it is not organically related to the actor It implies either egoistic pretence to something he does not deserve or else a misplaced humility in an attitude of regret or self pity, which might be momentary, as in the case of Arjuna, and which makes Krishna reprimand him in II, 2 and 3 Whether it is ambition or humility, doing another man s duty is a third or interfering factor which spoils the condition of bipolarity on which the whole of spiritual progress rests In this sense only can this rcference to *svadharma* (own duty) be understood To understand it in any other way would constitute politics and would not properly belong to spirituality at all, because to prohibit a man from entering competitively into a better profession when he could do the job as well as the other person is open to the charge in principle of supporting slavery or of violating the principle well accepted in modern life of equality of opportunity In fact, it is exactly in this fashion that contemplative texts like the Gita have been misinterpreted deliberately or unconsciously by interested groups. In a competitive society where the struggle between rival groups is but normal, this is not surprising But such interested interpretations have nothing in common with the teaching of the Gita which is certainly not a textbook on economic domination

Regarding *kilbisham* (sin) which is the same as the *papam* (sin) of II, 33 and 38 when an action becomes absolutely necessary, the very absoluteness of its necessity is its justification Conforming to one s nature amounts to recognizing a line of action as absolutely necessary although as an excuse this would not hold good in a court of law if one should murder

of water Common phrases like a sheep in wolf's clothing, a jackdaw in peacock's feathers, painting the lily, making a gift of stolen goods, refer to the same anomaly as *paradharma* (another's duty) Within the human species the strict rigidity with which occupations fit types of individuals is capable of more adjustment and adaptation through training and education Nurture supplements nature to a large extent, and trained men or women can adapt themselves to a wide range of occupations which normally in the general animal world would belong to different types

A sensitive youth of poetic or artistic temperament might feel himself a misfit in a military school and might even become abnormal if forced to submit to its rigours The four groups of persons just referred to in this Chapter may be considered as broadly representative types, but even here intermediate cases have to be supplied and provision made for the fluctuating adaptability of the individual within limits that are evident to reason

In the Gita it is not easy to see the relevancy of referring to the danger of *paradharma* (another man's duty) unless we should suppose that Arjuna is himself a case in point Arjuna's possible egoism is referred to in verse 59 later But his egoism has not been in evidence anywhere in the Gita On the other hand he is seen to have too much humility when he says in II, 5, that it would be better for him to be a beggar than to fight

This very humble attitude of Arjuna, however, contains perhaps an element of *paradharma* (another's duty) inasmuch as he is not a type fit to become a recluse or a *samnyasin* (renouncer) as implied in his words For a warrior of active temperament to suddenly become a quiet retiring recluse is incompatible This brings us to similar references in XVII, 5 and 6, of men who wrongly practise austerities Their *asuric* (demonic) nature has not been sublimated to one that fits them with the spirit of scripture In the instance implied there we can admit the nearest case within the Gita of a person who has mistaken his vocation

In order to get at the root of this theory of *paradharma* (another's duty) we have, however, to fit the theory where it properly belongs in the context of contemplation which is the most important primary consideration in the Gita When we read in II, 63, that a person who has lost his intelligence perishes, it is not in a physical or mechanistic sense that this is meant

someone on such grounds to take an extreme case In the absolutist context of contemplation, this however is a line which is valid and which should be kept in mind as a key to the way of contemplation

Conscientious objectors to war have the freedom of thinking that war is not absolutely necessary as applied to themselves If they are so convinced and if such an attitude has a fair chance of being tried out under any form of advanced govern ment it is well and good But the Gita could not anticipate such a contingency in its antique times This is not said here to justify or to deny conscientious objection to war but only for purposes of elucidation There is also the truth that if one general refuses to fight he will be automatically replaced and that does not help to change the situation The evil of war will be there anyhow We shall refer to this subject again under verses 59 and 60

[48] *sahajam karma kaunteya*
sadosham api na tyajet
sarvarambha hi doshena
dhumena gnir iva vritah

Duty naturally belonging to one by birth O Son of Kunti (Arjuna) though accompanied by defects ought not to be abandoned all undertakings are enveloped with defects as fire by smoke

The same imagery here has been employed already in III 38 Action has been given a very inferior position in II 49 Though inferior it has still been recognized because necessity is as eternal as contingency itself as stated in XIII 19

That a certain work is defective is therefore no disqualification That it is properly related to the actor and belongs to his proper nature is more important at least in contemplative life than its superiority as such in a mechanistic sense Again the apparent contradiction should be understood as we have explained in the last verse Regarding the use of the word *sahajam* (natural or congenital) we have already explained that it does not necessarily follow hereditary lines Action is to be tolerated or permitted in life as a necessary evil

[49] *asaktabuddhih sarvatra*
jitatma vigatasprihah

naishkarmyasiddhim paramam
samnyasena 'dhigachchhati

> He whose reason is unattached in situations, whose Self has been won over, from whom desire has gone, by renunciation (*samnyasa*) he reaches the supreme perfection of transcending action

This concludes a section prior to beginning another section where the same subject of practical spirituality continues in a sense more contemplative This verse marks the termination of a long discussion of spiritual values which still belong to the relative and necessary world of action The action and the actor have been studied in graded fashion with all possible degrees of values belonging to the context of action

It was in verse 12 of this Chapter that we found a problem posed but still left enigmatic When the *atyagi* (non relinquisher) was contrasted with the *samnyasin* (renouncer) instead of with its own counterpart the *tyagi* (relinquisher) there was a gap there, left to the imagination This was already partially explained in verse 8 just before Even earlier, in verses 5 and 6, it was categorically laid down that sacrifice, gifts and austerity should not be relinquished, but should be performed, leaving aside attachment to results From these verses it would seem that the Gita is in favour of relinquishment as against full *samnyasa* (renunciation of works)

Now that the author has had a full chance to explain the various kinds of values still belonging to the relativist world of activity and spiritual life, however, he is now prepared to admit at least the possibility of transcending action altogether, not in any blind mechanistic manner of a heterodox rationalist of the Samkhya pattern, but in an organic way normal to a yogi as well as to one who understands the implications of the Samkhya philosophy A finally revalued notion of renunciation proper to the Gita thus emerges to view in this verse

Naishkarmyasiddhih (perfection of transcending action) does not result from mere negation of action That would come under *akarma* (non-action) only and would not deserve the title " supreme applied here to the perfect yogi Such a perfected yogi would in principle conform to the pattern of a *samnyasin* (renouncer) He is more than a *tyagi* (relinquisher) who is only capable of eliminating interest in the results of

action and not in action itself *Samnyasa* (renunciation) then is at last admitted as a possible way of spirituality, although it looked as if it was discredited at the beginning of the Chapter in favour of *tyaga* (relinquishment)

[50] *siddhim prapto yatha brahma*
tatha pnoti nibodha me
samasenai 'va kaunteya
nishtha jnanasya ya para

How he who has ascended to perfection thereby obtains the Absolute, that supreme consummation of wisdom that do you learn from Me, O Son of Kunti (Arjuna), in brief

This begins a new section where action is left behind with the resultant perfection mentioned in the last verse It is no longer perfection which is the goal for the aspirant It is something of a more contemplative order by which he is fit to become the Absolute as stated in verse 53 below

[51] *buddhya visuddhaya yukto*
dhritya tmanam niyamya cha
sabdadin vishayams tyaktva
ragadveshau vyudasya cha

[52] *viviktasevi laghvasi*
yata vak kaya manasah
dhyanayogaparo nityam
vairagyam samupasritah

[53] *ahamkaram balam darpam*
kamam krodham parigraham
vimuchya nirmamah santo
brahmabhuyaya kalpate

Endowed with pure reason restraining the Self with firmness detaching oneself from sound and other sense objects and casting out liking and disliking,

dwelling in solitude, frugal in diet controlling speech, body and mind ever in meditative contemplation, resorting to dispassion,

and relinquishing egoism power arrogance, desire anger possessiveness free from ownership and tranquil he is worthy of becoming the Absolute

In these three verses a long enumeration of items which constitute the negative or contemplative way of spirituality is given It cannot strictly be called spiritual practice but rather a way of elimination like *neti neti* (not this not this) a withdrawal of the Self into the peace which is in ones Self

We can discover a graded sequence based on the contemplative epistemology running through the various items The purification of reason is the first item and then we pass on to such items as shutting out the senses and rejecting passions, and come to the requirements of solitude frugality in eating, etc We arrive at an item which involves true contemplation referred to here as the pair *dhyana* (meditation) and yoga (unitive understanding) both of which have to refer to the highest notion of the Absolute

Passing on to the items of verse 53 we notice that these conform to those mentioned in XVI 18 There is a striking incompatibility of the items here with such subtle contemplative items as meditation and yoga of the immediately preceding verses These items are of a cruder kind not directly related to contemplation Wisdom is often compared to a gentle mother This reference to the avoidance of violence arrogance etc must be meant by the author to refer to items that could fall in line with the discussion before it changed its tone after XVI 18 where it took on the tone of an angry punishing Jehovah From XVI 18 to the present verse the author had the express intention of covering the harsher and necessarily cruder aspects of spiritual life

[54] *brahmabhutah prasannatma*
na sochati na kankshati
samah sarveshu bhuteshu
madbhaktim labhate param

Becoming the Absolute blissfully serene in the Self, he neither despairs nor hankers equal minded towards all beings he attains a devotion to Me supreme (in character)

We come to a section beginning with this verse and ending in verse 63. Contemplative attitudes such as serenity, self-control, etc, were also alluded to in the section just over as in verse 42, but the perfection envisaged there was far from being final There is an ascent and a descent in yoga as indicated in VI, 3 In sections hitherto yoga could be said to have touched the highest point attainable in the *yogarudha* (one risen in yoga) The practice of ordinary virtues by a man living in society, and the rarer contemplative virtues still treated in the context of action or practice, were covered in the sections of this Chapter in their positive and negative implications, by verse 53 We now come to a section where perfection is conceived on its own in a more neutral or equalized manner, balanced between opposites

Brahmabhutah (becoming the Absolute) follows upon the same idea contained in verse 53 The ascent to perfection through action, implied in verse 49, had to be taken up again and subjected to further, more contemplative discipline, before the state of the yogi could conform to the requirements of verse 53 Even there he only became fit to become the Absolute After becoming the Absolute in the sense of verse 53, which may be described as merely conforming to the pattern of absolutism, there is evidently further ground to cover Such perfection still to be accomplished makes the subject matter of this section The extreme subtlety involved makes the author refer in verse 63 to what is stated here, as ' more secret than all secrets "

We remember that many references to grades of secrets have been mentioned in the Gita, especially at the beginning of Chapters, either by the word *paramam* (supreme) or *guhyam* (secret) In IX, 2 the latter expression was used with the simple adjunct *raja* (royal or public) In X, 1 and 2 there was further underlining of the superiority of the teaching Arjuna in XI 1 and again in XIV, 1 used the words "supreme" and 'superior nature in regard to the wisdom involved in these Chapters while in XV 10 and 11 the secrecy may be said to have reached its maximum though we find it further stressed in XV, 20 also In the present Chapter at the end, and not at the beginning as elsewhere the word secret again occurs A careful examination of the structure indicates that several grades of secret doctrines are present one meant to be more esoteric than the other and culminating in verses 63 and 64 of this Chapter and ending with the striking double superlative *sarvaguhyatamam* (the most secret of all) with which the secrecy reaches its term

Thus "becoming the Absolute" used here refers to only one of a series of steps still to be covered before the Gita concludes. Like the literary devices at the beginning of the work which had gradations, these expressions should be treated as punctuation marks belonging to literary requirements, before the contemplative teaching could be merged unobtrusively and artistically, through such graded steps, into the context of the *Mahabhārata* epic.

In the present section the tension is further relieved by one degree The reference to a fatalistic god in verse 61 still retains the imperative tone of necessity or compulsion, but in spite of this we find that the technique of yoga involving balance or serenity is not altogether abandoned in verse 54. This new subdued tone and balanced way of teaching is maintained up to verse 58.

Returning to verse 54 itself there is the word *bhakti* (devotion) As a spiritual factor this displaces action, which took the central place hitherto

[55] *bhaktyā mām abhijānāti*
yāvān yas cha 'smi tattvatah
tato mām tattvato jnātvā
visate tadanantaram

Through devotion he comes to know Me, how far comprehensible I am and which, in accord with first principles, then, having known Me philosophically, he immediately enters into (Me).

The primacy given to devotion in the last verse is soon counter-balanced by its own intellectual counterpart implied in the word *tattvatah* (in accord with true principles) Knowledge again gains primacy here

[56] *sarvakarmāny api sadā*
kurvāno madvyapāsrayah
matprasadād avāproti
sāsvatam padam avyayam

Although still continuing to do all actions (in life), treating Me as his refuge by My grace he obtains the everlasting undiminishing status

Reference to action again comes in, but it is here considered with a neutral attitude in the same spirit as in IV, 18 The only difference here is that personal surrender is included

[57] *chetasa sarvakarmani*
mayi samnyasya matparah
buddhiyogam upasritya
machchhitah satatam bhava

Mentally renouncing all actions into Me, regarding Me as the Supreme, resorting to unitive understanding, have Me wholly filling your (relational) consciousness

What is stated in a more final form in verses 65 and 66 is said here more mildly, where there is still action, though viewed with a certain degree of aloofness This verse is not far different from verse XI, 55

[58] *machchittah sarvadurgani*
matprasadat tarishyasi
atha chet tvam ahamkaran
na sroshyasi vinakshyasi

(Thus with) consciousness filled with Me, you will overcome all obstacles by My grace, but if, from egoism, you will not listen, you shall come to ruin

Here there is reference to a grave disaster which might befall Arjuna's contemplative Self and not the body, as we have already explained

The *sarvadurgani* (all obstacles) referred to here is meant by the author to cover the actual diffidence of Arjuna on the battlefield as also his hesitations and doubts in the purer wisdom context

[59] *yad ahamkaram asritya*
na yotsya iti manyase
mithyai sha vyavasayas te
prakritis tvam niyokshyati

If, resorting to egoism you think, ' I will not fight," absurd is this, your resolution Nature will compel you.

This and the following three verses give a very imperative and absolutist status to the factor of necessity in life The idea is not unknown in Western philosophy Kant s categorical im perative based on *a priori* reasoning comes nearest to the idea of the impelling force here given a very exalted status

Man s personality is caught between his freewill and the force of necessity It would be fatal not to recognize one or the other Equal poise between these two factors of necessity and contingency constitutes yoga as stated in the definition *samatvam yoga uchyate* (equanimity is called yoga) in ii 48

The reference here to egoism as well as in the previous verse has a special meaning as related to yoga on the one hand and to the supreme force of absolute necessity of verse 61 on the other hand If the ego is assertive necessity can also be assertive to its utmost limit Arjuna was as humble as could be as we have already explained The question of arrogance does not arise with him But even humility if it does not fit in with the context as contemplatively understood is a form of egoism just as relinquishment itself was disqualified as demonic in verse 8 earlier Arjuna s egoism if any may therefore be said to be of the negative type

Further indications of the egoism meant here are to be gathered from verse 14 earlier where it is said that out of the five factors which enter into necessary action to make it impe rative the *karta* (actor) is only one who is caught or jammed as it were in between the others some immanent or necessary and others transcendental or contingent The *daivam* (divinity) or providential factor mentioned applied there to the contin gent Here however in verse 61 divinity is said to dwell within the heart of each person and the necessary and contingent are brought close together and treated unitively

As in the formula *Aum tat sat* (Absolute Word That is Real) which was analysed at the end of Chapter xvii the spiritual attitude recommended here may be said to be that of that *tat* (That) of xvii 25

Egoism has elsewhere been referred to as the enemy of con templation both directly and indirectly in iii 27 and xvi 18 The triple gate of inferno of xvi 21 again implies the ego The ego has its place among the elemental forces as a factor belong ing to the Absolute as seen in vii 4 and xiii 5 A single self or individual makes but a single swallow in the general necessary situation called summer Egoism consists in the swallow isolat ing itself from the general situation and claiming an ego for

itself, suffering from the illusion that it has a disjunct status plucked away from the whole situation

A general who is ordered by his high command to bomb a city is not responsible for the whole evil of war, or even for the bombing, nor does his wilful refusal or exit from the operation make any appreciable change to the whole situation of warfare Some people tend to isolate themselves in this way, claiming to be free, original or progressive Others likewise isolate themselves in the name of conservatism or diehard forms of orthodoxy These are subtle spiritual egoisms The closed conservatism of orthodoxy expresses itself often as glaring cases of wilful and harsh egoism even in the name of spiritual values

In his *Upadesa Sahasri* (*One Thousand Teachings*) Sankara refers to the case of a religious student who claims to be a brahmin Sankara considers this attitude as a disqualification for a student of contemplation Again in the *Chandogya Upanishad* (iv, iv, 1 5), Satyakama Jabala the humble, illicitly born novice in wisdom is readily admitted by the Guru Gautama because he was innocently non egoistic In its subtle and gross forms egoism can be said to be the one single item which constitutes the enemy of contemplation The *Viveka Chudamani* (*Crest Jewel of Discrimination*) of Sankara refers to the cutting by the sword of wisdom of the three heads of egoism which are of the *gunas* (modalities of nature) inclusive of *sattva* (the pure or clear modality) which might be called belonging to spiritual egoism before one becomes qualified to tread the path of contemplation

[60] *svabhavajena kaunteya*
nibaddhah svena karmana
kartum ne chchhasi yan mohat
karishyasy avaso pi tat

That which through confusion, you do not like to do O Son of Kunti (Arjuna), you shall do that (very thing) helplessly bound by your own nature born action

The actual case of Arjuna is under specific scrutiny here and the factors of the situation pressing on him from every side are mentioned in their most actual aspects It is to prepare the mind of the reader to see the imperative nature of the situation in which he was actually caught as Arjuna, Son of Kunti, and

not merely as a representative of a Self or soul that the pre paratory discussion of the four divisions of society and their corresponding vocations were referred to in minute detail in verses 18 to 45 of this Chapter

We have shown how the theory of castes was not mainly conceived sociologically and this verse makes it evident why it was even necessary for the Gita to refer to the subject at all As a theory in the Gita it has only an incidental status to determine how necessity in a very actual form pressed on Arjuna so that in his exceptional case killing involved in war could be explained as being without sin It is not intended however as some people hold to teach in the Gita that killing by all and sundry under other circumstances than that of Arjunas so pointedly referred to here would be spiritual moral or even fair In his case it so happened that his inner temperament and disposition and internal impelling forces tallied with elements that constituted the total ty of the same situation so as to justify the action recommended by Krishna The situation is not unlike that of childbirth in which a mid wife might help Not to give help would be fatal to the mother involved like not vomiting would make a patient worse when once the vomiting had started

Whether after the tension of war and the imperative urge of the situation itself was over Arjuna still remained brazen or warlike does not arise at this juncture But it is quite probable that afterwards he became a contemplative in a truer sense His actual war experience must have had its sobering contem plative lessons to teach him as he himself admits in verse 73 later

This very Krishna once asked Arjuna in II 33 to think of his honour involved It was stressed many times later that one must transcend all forms of egoism includ ng honour (e g XV 5) Calling attention to honour in this instance may be thought a glaring inconsistency in the teaching of the Gita but the teaching had hardly begun when that reference was made Honour as a value was equated to death in the next verse II 34 Such a high status given to the quality of honour understood as a form of chivalry is itself contemplative in its character like values such as sportsmanship statemanship etc in other fields of life Moreover the item of honour formed a necessary constituent of the situation of war (in Chapter II) This is what is being recognized in the present verse though from the other final end of the discussion when all other contemplative values have been given due consideration. The

reference to honour was therefore justified, as an initial contemplative value, by whose mention Arjuna could be whipped or brought back to normality from his morbid state of negation and depression. In returning at the end of the Gita to the actualities of the same war situation, the reference to honour is again justified.

[61] *isvarah sarvabhūtānām*
hriddese 'rjuna tishthati
bhrāmayan sarvabhūtāni
yantrārūdhāni māyayā

The Lord dwells in the heart-region of all beings, O Arjuna, causing all beings to revolve through the principle of appearance (*māyā*) (as if) mounted on a machine.

The Absolute is conceived here with all the possible implications of the categorical imperative we have mentioned. The body is a slave to the spirit and obeys its will and impulses to the minutest detail. Even in a state of sleep or subconsciousness, a person's dreams are regulated and subject to his mental conditionings. A decision concerning a necessary act in a given situation can be said to be wholly dependent on the will of the Absolute within man.

The reference to *māyā* (philosophical principle behind appearance) as the inscrutable principle of unreality which intervenes between the actual world and reality itself absolves this verse from any charge of postulating a god who is a ready-made mechanical entity. He only *appears* to be so by the intervention of this negative principle.

[62] *tam eva saranam gachchha*
sarvabhāvena bhārata
tatprasādāt parām sāntim
sthānam prāpsyasi sāsvatam

Seek refuge in Him alone in all ways, O Bhārata (Arjuna); by His grace you shall obtain the peaceful abode, supreme, everlasting.

This penultimate verse to this sub-section abolishes the one-sided picture of the Absolute implied in the previous verse, with a view to concluding this section.

The expression *sarvabhavena* (in all ways) means with every possible approach that Arjuna is capable of, in the light of all previous teachings, and is discarding the partial view of the last verse

The reference to an eternal and peaceful dwelling place indicates that all references to necessary action are closed with this verse The Absolute itself regains a status in keeping with the *purushottama* (Paramount Person) of Chapter xv

Note that the reference in this verse is not in the first person as usual, but in the third person The first person is used again only in verse 66 From this it would be legitimate to infer that the *Isvara* (Lord) of verse 61 approximates to a theistic concept of God as near as could be, if at all, within the whole range of the Gita There are only two other places where this third person is used in VIII, 10 and 21 When the notion of the Absolute in the Gita, which is not, generally speaking, theistic has occasionally to be represented in objectified philosophical or theistic terms, then that indirect or third person is employed

[63] *iti te jnanam akhyātam*
guhyad guhyataram maya
vimrisyai tad aseshena
yathe chchhasi tatha kuru

Thus has wisdom more secret than all that is secret been declared to you by Me, (critically) scrutinizing all, omitting nothing, do as you like

This verse absolves the Gita completely from being looked upon as a *dharma sastra* (code of religious obligations and injunctions) Although some recommendations and advice have been given, sometimes in a tone of authority as when Krishna said, Bow down to Me in IX 34 and in a more obligatory context when the relinquishment of results of action was mentioned in XII, 11, all the other injunctions are to immediate necessary actions like fighting, which Arjuna is incidentally asked not to omit

Now the shackles of obligation are overthrown completely by the second line of this verse The secret so far is only inferior to the final secret of the next section, especially in verse 65, where the doctrine is repeated almost in the same words as in IX, 34

18 and 19 of this Chapter The relation between obligatory action and pure wisdom is very subtle and we have had occasion to point this out under verse 12 earlier

Even admitting therefore that the Gita teaches wisdom and action it is not necessary to fall into the error of thinking that *karma* (action) is not considered an evil, though necessary The Gita does not recommend a way of works for salvation, but only treats of action and gives it an important place as a necessary evil

The author has never been tired of repeating that action is very inferior to wisdom, even as early as ii, 49 Various analogies of flame and smoke, mirror and dust, foetus and amnion, were given in iii, 38, and desire leading to action was mentioned as the enemy of wisdom in iii, 39 We see this attitude consistently maintained throughout the philosophical discussion in the main body of the work Even all sins could be transcended by the boat of wisdom in iv, 36, and all action whatever culminates in wisdom in iv, 33 and the fire of wisdom consumes everything, in iv, 37 Almost every Chapter begins with a reference to wisdom

There is really no room, after all these references, even to suspect that the Gita is a religious work. In fact it is called a *brahma vidya sastra* (text on the Science of the Absolute) on yoga, at the end of each Chapter, and its resemblance to and origin in the Upanishads, which are more contemplatively philosophical than religious in character, must be clear to the most superficial reader

Even the popular poem, the *Gita dhyana* from the *Vaisnaviya Tantrasara* says the Upanishads are the cows and Krishna is the milker, Arjuna the calf, the wise man the drinker and the ambrosial Gita is the milk. (*sarvopanishado gavo dogdha gopala nandanah partho vatsah sudhir bhokta dugdham gitamritam mahat*)

The final blow to any vestige of belief in the religious character of the Gita has been given by this verse in which Arjuna is clearly asked to abandon all duties The only point that might favour such an opinion consists perhaps in Arjuna being asked to worship Krishna or the principle of Providence in verse 61

From the vision of the universal form in Chapter xi it was sufficiently clear that Krishna did not represent any conventional theistic god of any particular religion Religion binds people to common patterns of behaviour, and in the absence of any such pattern except the paramount one of affiliating

oneself to the Absolute Reality mentioned at the end of Chapters IV and XVIII respectively, which affiliation cannot be considered other than philosophical, there is no reason to consider the Gita as a religious text standing for any special form of religion

Inasmuch as Krishna represents the Absolute, any religious connotation attached to the word *bhakti* (devotion) becomes also one that can apply as well to the context of wisdom Sankara himself defines *bhakti* (devotion) as constant meditation on the Self

That sins are to be transcended by wisdom alone and not through religious practices of any kind, is clearly the main teaching of the Gita, summed up in this verse, as in verses IX, 30 and 31

Notice that this applies to *all* sins

[67] *idam te na tapaskaya*
na bhaktaya kadachana
na chā susrushave vachyam
na cha mam yo 'bhyasuyati

This is never to be spoken about by you to one (spiritually) undisciplined, nor to one devoid of devotion, nor to one indisposed to listen, nor again to one who denies Me

This verse contains the same principle of the Bible which says, "those who are not with me are against me," the corollary of which is that those who are not against me are with me A mutual adoption between *guru* and *sishya* (teacher and disciple) has always been considered an important desideratum in the wisdom teaching

Between the teacher and the disciple alone can true dialectics thrive, and persons not contemplatively disposed are more often repelled than attracted to enter into such a bipolar relationship It is in this sense that the word *tapas* (austerity, discipline) and also *bhakti* (devotion) should be understood. The minimum qualification of a disciple or a wisdom seeker is his willingness to listen, which is mentioned here as *susrusha* (eagerness to listen)

[68] *ya idam paramam guhyam*
madbhakteshv abhidhasyati

delusion. This is the minimum active requirement for affiliation to contemplation. The result indicated is admitted by Arjuna in the next verse.

Arjuna uvācha

[73] *nashto mohah smritir labdhā*
tvatprasādān mayā 'chyuta
sthito 'smi gatasamdehah
krishye vachanam tava

Arjuna said:
Gone is my delusion and Self-recognition has been gained by me through Your grace, O Achyuta (Krishna); I am properly established with doubts gone, I shall carry out Your word.

Arjuna's answer contained here that he will do the bidding as told by Krishna has not much of an active implication at the end of this work, when the drama is to close. Whether he fought actually after these words is not relevant to the teaching and it is purposely left out. The obedience here can also apply to what he was asked to do in verses 51 to 53 earlier, which covers the whole range of contemplative activity, if it could be called so.

Samjaya uvācha

[74] *ity aham vāsudevasya*
pārthasya cha mahātmanah
samvādam imam asrausham
adbhutam romaharshanam

Samjaya said:
Thus have I heard this wonderful dialogue between Vāsudeva (Krishna) and the high-souled Pārtha (Arjuna), causing my hair to stand on end.

The drop curtain implied in the literary device of the Gita may be said to have come down in this verse, hiding Krishna and Arjuna, and thus restoring the epic setting of the stage.

[75] *vyāsaprasādāch chhrutavān*
etad guhyam aham param

yogam yogesvarat krishnat
sakshat kathayatah svayam

By the grace of Vyasa I heard this supreme and most secret yoga and spoken by Krishna himself the Lord of Yoga as immediately given to my senses

This verse refers to Samjaya as actually witnessing the scene where the dialogue took place But then it brings in the name of Vyasa who is well known to be the author of the whole work A double literary device is here implied which by canceling one against the other one can see that Vyasa himself as the author manager appears in front of the curtain before the spectators Or it can be treated as an author s signature Sankara however prefers to think that Vyasa gave Samjaya the *jnana chakshush* (wisdom-eye) by which he was able to witness the scene actually A certain amount of myth making being permitted in contemplative literature we cannot seriously object to this way of putting it

[76] *rajan samsmritya samsmritya*
samvadam imam adbhutam
kesavarjunayoh punyam
hrishyami cha muhur muhuh

O King as I remember and remember this marvellous and sacred dialogue between Kesava (Krishna) and Arjuna I rejoice over and over again

The stress on memory or remembering four times in this and the next verse is to effect a beautiful fade-out of the scene as a reminiscence to be treasured by Samjaya for all time

[77] *tach cha samsmritya samsmritya*
rupam atyadbhutam hareh
vismayo me mahan rajan
hrishyami cha punah punah

As I remember and remember even that most marvellous form of Hari great is my astonishment O King and I rejoice over and over again

The vision of the Absolute represented by Hari (Krishna here) which can also be Vishnu for those who habitually recognize the Absolute by that name, is brought to the centre instead of the two characters of the dialogue The reference to the vision of the Absolute is said by Sankara to apply to the vision of Chapter XI, which corresponds to the nearest approach to such a vision of the Absolute coming within the Gita text The conventional picture of a beneficent God, however, cannot be easily fitted into the awe inspiring vision of that Chapter

[78] *yatra yogesvarah krishno*
yatra partho dhanurdharah
tatra srir vijayo bhutir
dhruva nitir matir mama

Where there is Krishna, the Lord of Yoga, where there is Partha (Arjuna) the Archer, there (will be) prosperity, victory, progress and well established justice such is my (Samjaya's) belief

In this finale Krishna and Arjuna emerge once again, this time as actors in the *Mahabharata* Ordinary righteousness, prosperity, victory and justice are mentioned here, so that the Gita may end on a note in the same key as that of the epic with which it began

Though wisdom values are not related directly to these values mentioned here their indirect repercussions on normal human life are such as to promote, through love of simple truth, the general all round welfare of men in ordinary walks of life The values here are all desirable in everyday life and refer to what is true The term *dhruva* (fixed, established) applied to justice here is related by derivation both to *dharma* (righteousness) and *dharitri* (the firm earth)

Krishna here may be taken to have reverted to his status as the charioteer, absolutist, friend and relation of Arjuna Arjuna himself is wielding his famous bow *Gandiva*, which slipped from his hand in I, 30, when his confusion was asserting itself, and which he wilfully cast away as we know from I, 47 Now that normal conditions and relationships have been established and he is no more regretful nor in doubt the normal positive consequences of prosperity victory progress and well established justice begin to prevail The final value here is what has

been referred to more generally as *lokasamgraha* (world welfare) in III, 20 and 25 where King Janaka is held up as a model

ity srimad bhagavadgitasupanishatsu brahmavidyayam
yogasastre srikrishnarjunasamvade
samnyasayogo nama shtadaso dhyayah
iti srimadbhagavadgita upanishadah samaptah

Thus ends in the Upanishads of the Songs of God in the Science of the Wisdom of the Absolute in the Dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna the Eighteenth Chapter entitled The Unitive Way in Behaviour Patterns

THUS CONCLUDES THE UPANISHAD CALLED THE BHAGAVAD GITA

TRANSLATION: MEDITATION ON THE GITA

1. Aum—I meditate on Thee, O Mother Bhagavad Gitā, made up of eighteen chapters, showering the nectar of advaita (non-dualism) that can banish all (phenomenal) becoming, inserted into the middle of the Mahābhārata by Vyāsa that antique Sage, as it was taught to Arjuna by Nārāyana himself, the Blessed One.

2. Saluation to thee, O Vyāsa of expansive intellect, having eyes like the petals of an open lotus, who has lit the Wisdom-Lamp filled with the oil which is the Bhārata epic.

3. Adoration to Krishna, representing in himself that wish-fulfilling heavenly tree (the summum bonum of an eternal cosmology) brought within the reach of those who refuge themselves (in him) as he, wielding the whip (of the charioteer) in one hand, and with the wisdom-Teacher's gesture (in the other hand), milks the nectar of the Gita.

4. All the Upanishads are cows, their Milker is the darling of the cowherds, the calf (inducing secretion) is Pārtha (Arjuna) and the drinkers thereof are all men of good sense; and what is milked is nothing but the Gita nectar great!

5. I adore that World Teacher Krishna, son of Vasudeva, the divine One, who overcame Kamsa and Chānura who was Devaki's bliss supreme!

6. With Kesava (Krishna) at the helm, was crossed over by the Pāndavas (of yore) that battle river for which the banks were Bhishma and Drona, whose waters were Jayadratha, whose blue lilies were the Gandhāras, the crocodile wherein was Salya, and the sharks Asvatthāma and Vikarna, and the whirlpool Duryodhana.

7. Born out of the limpid lake of the words of the son of Pārāsara, may such a lotus which is even the Mahābhārata epic, spreading the fragrance of Gita-meaning, containing numerous secondary anecdotes which are its pollen-bearing anthers, opening to wisdom-light because of having the story of Hari (Vishnu or Krishna) as its content of good teaching, be for our (everlasting) good as it cleans away the dross incidental to the age of Kali (the evil cosmic period of

thousands of years) as it is sucked day after day by the bees who are none other than the good men on earth

8 Adorations to Madhava (Krishna) source supreme of bliss, whose grace can make an orator of a dumb man and enable the lame to cross mountains

9 He Whom Brahma, Varuna, Indra, Rudra and Marut ever praise with celestial hymns, Whom the chanters of the Sama (veda) do extol with songs comprising the Vedas together with their sub divisions respecting word and order, not omitting the Upanishads too He Whom the contemplatives with minds merged thereinto and established firm in meditation can see, Whose end is beyond the ken equally of gods and their rival spirits, to such a Divinity, do I offer adoration!

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WORD INDEX

(Chapter and Verse)

The generally accepted romanized equivalents of the Samskrt alphabet or syllabery are given here, while in the body of this book a simplified transliteration is used, in order to avoid what might be considered ugly diacritical marks

The dictionary order of Samskrt which has to be followed here, is

a, a, i, i, u, u, r r, l l̄, e, ai, o, au, m, h, k, kh, g gh, n, c, ch, j, jh, n, t, ṭh, d, ḍh, n, t, th, d, dh, n, p, ph, b, bh, m, y, r, l, v, ś, ṣ, s, h

WORD INDEX

a अ

ā आ

u उ

ū ऊ

ṛ ऋ

kha ख

ga ग

jñā ज्ञ

ta त

jñā ज्ञ

ta त

da द

dha ध

na न

pa प

pha फ

ba ब

bha भ

ya य

ya य

va व

śa श

sa ष

sa स

ha ह

na ह

GENERAL INDEX

(*Select Names and Expressions only*)